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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an action research project undertaken in 1972-1973, to determine whether a parent education program with a focus on the mother/child system could be developed effectively with urban Aboriginal families. A discussion of the importance of the home as a factor shaping children's school progress is followed by a description of the social/family situation of urban Aborigines as reported in the research literature. A detailed picture of the characteristics and ongoing lives of the families participating in the project is presented. An examination of the rationales underlying a variety of approaches to the establishment of links between home and school leads to the affirmation of merit in approaches which focus on the parent/child dyad. More than a third of the report consists of a detailed description of the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project itself. A discussion of the project families focuses on family structure, size of household, housing, mobility, educational level and occupational status, health and attitudes toward self and community. The yearly objectives of the project, the research team, selection of sample, and the two major intervention programs (home teaching and library program) are also discussed in detail. Also included are a description of research methodology, an evaluation of the project and its effects on evaluation, of the parent/child approach and a set of recommendations. Appendices are included. (Author/CM)

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FOCUS ON PARENT/CHILD:

EXTENDING THE TEACHING COMPETENCE OF URBAN ABORIGINAL MOTHERS

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1977

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INTRODUCTION

The action research project reported in this paper was undertaken in 1972-1973. Its major goal was to determine whether a parent education program with a focus on the mother/child system could be effectively developed with urban Aboriginal families. In the first year, the program was conducted by a white parent educator; in the second year the team of parent educators was extended to include three Aboriginal mothers.

The report presents, firstly, an analysis of the importance of the home as a factor shaping children's school progress. Then, the social/family situation of urban Aboriginals, as reported in the research literature is described; following this, a detailed picture is presented of the characteristics and the on-going lives of the families who participated in the research project.

There follows an examination of the rationale underlying a variety of approaches to the establishment of links between home and school; this examination leads to the conclusion that there is considerable merit in approaches which focus on the parent/child dyad.

A detailed description of the research project is presented: its planning, implementation and evaluation. As much detail as possible is included so that the reader may be in a position to judge the underlying philosophy and the extent to which it was realized in the practical procedures.

Finally, on the evidence that such a parent education project can be implemented and can have a positive effect on the participating families, a set of recommendations is presented, in the hope that a wider-scale testing of this type of program will be instituted.

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PREFACE

During over twenty years of research work with Aboriginal parents and their children throughout Australia, I have been seeking for ways of helping to ensure that Aboriginal children will profit from the school system, in line with their parents' wishes.

This concern, together with the convictions that parent/child interactions are highly significant experiences in the child's educational life, and that Aboriginal parents are, in fact, much more capable teachers than they give themselves credit for, led to the planning of the research project reported in this paper.

Much of the success of the project is attributable to the Senior Parent Educator, the co-author of this report. Mrs Henry brought to the project an immense warmth, an ability to relate to Aboriginal mothers and children, the gift for working creatively with the mothers to help them discover unsuspected opportunities for interacting with their children, and an enjoyment of the mothers, their children and the project. In her execution of her role initially as Senior Parent Educator and later as leader of the Aboriginal Parent Educators, she exhibited always her firm belief in the abilities of the mothers in the program.

The three Aboriginal Parent Educators, Mrs Eunice Collins, Mrs Barbara Coolwell and Mrs Maureen Rayment also brought to the program a commitment and a major contribution. They proved beyond doubt that Aboriginal mothers can become effective educators not only of their children, but also of other mothers.

Finally, of course, the project could not have continued but for the participation of the project mothers and their children. In thanking them for co-operating with us in testing out our assumptions we should like to say how much we enjoyed working with them and how grateful we are to them for the opportunities they gave us to enlarge our own understandings.

Betty H. Watts
Project Director

FOREWORD

This program would be good for any minority group, not only Aboriginals. Many parents are frightened to talk to teachers. They feel they can't express themselves. It's partly shyness; it's partly that they feel they haven't got the education to talk to a teacher. In our program we were working with children but educating the parents: suggesting that they were the most important teachers in the child's life.

The program helped the three of us too, as parents, to realize that education starts at home.

In a way it ended at a crucial moment, because the parents we worked with were just getting into the swing of it. We were too. As well, it would have been a good idea if we had been able to see how the children progressed through school.

One of the greatest things about the program was the confidence it gave to the housebound mothers, and to us, to mix with people socially. Not only has the program helped us to understand the value of education in the home, but it also opened our eyes to the opportunities for interesting jobs that are now available to Aboriginal women, and helped us to be more confident in our jobs when we got them.

Eunice Collins
Barbara Coolwell
Maureen Rayment

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Aboriginal Parent Educators working with mothers and children.

CHAPTER 1

THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF HOME AND SCHOOL IN DETERMINING CHILDREN'S SCHOOL PROGRESS

Society has established schools for its young. The roles of schools are currently under intense scrutiny as various groups in the community feel concern about the adolescents - their characteristics and their competence - as they complete their schooling and enter the adult world of work or unemployment, displaying varying attitudes and beliefs, as contributing citizen or as delinquent. Clearly schools, in the eyes of the community, have a valid role to play in the socialization of children and adolescents.

Societal concern is expressed also about the negative influence of some homes on some children. In expressing this concern, society recognizes the role of the home in the socialization of children and young people - a role which is by some well-performed and by others executed in such a fashion that the children are left vulnerable to life's vicissitudes and ill-prepared for adult roles.

Socialization refers to the processes whereby the immature in a society are indoctrinated into the ways of that society, the processes through which a society perpetuates itself from generation to generation. In western societies, formal education (school education) is an essential element in socialization. Its goals are many and varied and, indeed, different groups in a society emphasize and give priority to different goals. For the purposes of discussion, we would suggest that a working statement of the goals of formal education might be: schools aim through their personnel and program to help children to develop in an optimal fashion so that they might achieve greater happiness, satisfaction, success, self-realization, sense of purpose and enjoyment of learning during the years of their childhood and adolescence, so that they might develop their imaginations and their joy in living and so that they might develop a concern for others, an appreciation of others and a concern for social justice. We would hope further that they might also, on leaving school, find a meaningful and secure place in the wider community and make appropriate contributions to the well-being and development of that community.

If we take this view of school education and its goals, then obviously education is not a matter for the school alone. The home plays a major role, also. Where home and school work co-operatively together, the likely result for the child is achievement of the goals; where schools proceed as if they were the sole or the most important influence on children, the likely result is, for the majority of children, school failure.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOME

The home has an undoubted influence on the way in which children respond to the school environment and the degree of success they achieve in this new setting. Several studies (e.g. Coleman's 1966 United States study of the equality of education opportunity (Coleman et al., 1966) and Wiseman's study of eleven year old Manchester children (H.M.S.O. 1967)) have shown that the home is, in fact, more important than the school in determining how well children do at school.

Rosier, 1973, in his analysis of factors determining the school success of Australian fourteen year olds in science, confirmed the significance of home background. He concluded:

> " Even if the school conditions in 'low home background' schools were improved, they would still have lower school scores than the 'high home background' schools. You cannot compensate for this handicap merely by changing school conditions." (Rosier, 1973: 10)

We must ask why the home exerts this critical influence on the children's school achievement. A partial answer lies in the cumulative nature of child development. Children base later learnings on earlier learnings. They bring to school, as a result of their home experiences, certain concepts, skills and knowledge and these are the bases on which they respond to what the school has to offer. They also bring to school, as a result of their home experiences, certain orientations, expectations and attitudes; these help determine how they will perceive the school and hence the influence the school will have upon their further development. Also as a result of home and community experiences (both before school entrance and during out-of-school hours) they have developed certain values, certain behaviours; certain rewards and sanctions have become meaningful to them and others have no significance for them.

As a result, then, of these experiences, children are ready to respond differentially to what the school has to offer and will consequently profit differentially from these offerings. The home has provided the first major teaching for the child and will throughout his life, at least the early years of his life, inevitably continue to act as an educator.

We need to examine, in some detail, the particular roles of parents and the particular roles of teachers; we need to determine where these overlap and where they differ. If there is to be a fruitful partnership, a further need must be satisfied: teachers must understand the expectations that parents have of schools and parents must know what expectations teachers hold of them.

What are the specific contributions that the home makes to the educational development of children once they are at school? We would suggest that these include the following:

They provide the major emotional climate in which children grow and develop. Parents are normally more significant in the child's eyes than are his teachers and it is his parents' values, attitudes and beliefs that he is likely to incorporate.

Because of this climate, the parents are a major force in helping to determine the young child's goals. The goals he adopts shape his behaviour in and out of the classroom.

Parents provide a great variety of learning experiences for the young child - in the home, via the mass media, and through the whole range of activities conducted by the family outside the home.

They have an intimate knowledge of the child within the home setting, because of the many opportunities provided for observation. Thus they know him as a person - his likes and dislikes, his reactions, the things which prove attractive to him, the rewards that are perceived by him to be rewarding and the ways of learning he prefers. This knowledge is to some degree necessarily subjective.

They can provide an individual learning situation for the child, almost a tutorial setting. They can offer almost instant feedback to him in his learning endeavours; they can manipulate experiences and explanations to suit the individual child.

They know how the child reacts to the school program and school events and can help him in a one-to-one situation to examine and profit from these reactions.

They can provide a setting, which the school cannot, for the child's application of his school learnings to his out-of-school life.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCHOOL

What are the specific contributions which the teachers bring to the child's learning?

In a sense they view the child from a much wider vantage point than can the home. They see the child within the context of his age group, and they see him also in settings where, in some ways, he is more free to be himself than is the case in the home.

They are able to make a more objective appraisal of the child, of his strengths and weaknesses, than can the home.

The teachers, of course, bring to the situation professional pedagogical skills, insights and knowledge which they can use to tempt the child to make steady progress towards the objectives of the educational program.

Teachers also offer themselves as adults other than parents as role models for the children.

It would seem obvious then that, if the child is to profit from both groups of teaching adults, there is an urgent need for communication between the home and the school and a marked degree of continuity between school and out-of-school experiences.

Dottrens (196?) has argued:

" It is not the school which is the centre of the child's life, but his family, his friends, his house, his street, his village and the relationships which all this implies. Any educational system or curriculum which cuts the child off from the sources of his experiences and emotions stands self-condemned. "

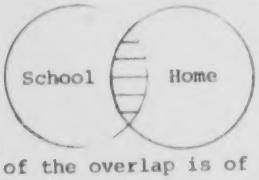
We think, in many ways, because of the lack of communication between school and home and because of the failure of the school to recognize and value the specific contribution of the home, that we have cut many children off from the sources of their experiences and emotions. In the beginning when schools were planned, the view of learning that prevailed and the educational objectives which were held led to the creation of buildings. The children's learning experiences were planned to occur within the four walls of the school. At the same time fences were erected around the school and over time the effect was gradually to hedge the school off from the community it served, to see education as the school's business and as a process which occurred within the school complex. Gradually there developed, among some teachers at least, a view that they were the experts and that they alone could and should provide the learning settings for the children. Education was the school's business.

This has perhaps had minimum adverse effects on some young children, but the adverse effects on many children have been extreme. These are the children from homes and sub-communities whose values and styles of life differ in some ways from the values of the school which is essentially a mainstream culture institution.

HOME-SCHOOL DISCONTINUITIES

Obviously there are some areas of overlap between home and school for most children; there is probably rarely complete overlap, even in the case of mainstream middle-class children. For these latter, the situation might be seen as:

For many culturally different children the area of overlap is much slighter:



While the magnitude of the overlap is of importance, the most significant issue is the content of the areas where there is no overlap. Some incongruities

between the home and the school experiences of the child are probably of little import; all children can (and need to) tolerate a degree of dissonance, a degree of conflict. But there are some areas of the child's life situation where dissonance between home and school experiences has a major debilitating effect on his educational and personal development and fulfilment.

Such areas include particularly values, motives, linguistic systems and cognitive styles.

(i) VALUES

The values of the school determine its goals, its priorities, the behaviours it seeks to induce in children, the behaviours it rewards, the very curriculum it offers. It would seem that most schools reflect the values of the middle-class mainstream culture; these are the achievement related values described by Kluckhohn:

> "*individualistic* relational orientation; the *achieving* orientation, wherein judgment of a person's value is primarily on the basis of his accomplishments, his productivity, the *man-against nature*, rational-mastery orientation; and the definition of human nature as evil but perfectible." (Kluckhohn, 1950)

Many cultural minorities, however, reveal a different profile of values: for some group goals have primacy over individual goals; a person, in some communities, is judged in terms of what he is, rather than what he has achieved. These are the affiliative rather than the achievement sub-cultures, and members of these groups interact with their children in the light of their value systems.

Child rearing values vary, too, by sub-culture and social class. Kohn's studies, for example (Kohn, 1959, 1963, 1966, 1969) have shown working-class parents to value obedience, neatness and cleanliness, while middle-class parents ascribe greater importance to characteristics such as curiosity, happiness, consideration and self-control. His and other data suggest also a social class difference in respect to the valuing of self-direction and conformity to external authority; discontinuity between school and home with regard to these values has strong implications for the minority child's feelings of security and hence his feelings of competence and confidence.

Just as the school's activities are predetermined by its values, so, too, are children's activities shaped by their values. Only if classroom goals are consonant with their values and only if they hold positive attitudes towards education and/or the teacher and/or classroom activites, will the children strive to achieve success.

(ii) MOTIVES

Motives are internal forces to action. An aroused motive mobilizes the child's energy, effort and striving. Under its influence, he directs his efforts towards goals which he believes will satisfy that motive. If, for example, he has a strong felt need for teacher approval, he will strive with tasks where success will, in his view, bring praise and approval from the teacher.

Motives play a further role in learning: only under the influence of an aroused motive will a child use his abilities fully to deal with a given situation.

The child in the classroom who is not motivated towards school goals is likely to be unsuccessful. His poor performance may lead his teacher to conclude that he lacks ability. While this will sometimes be true, often his performance reflects a lack of motivation, a lack of involvement, rather than a lack of ability.

Ausubel (1968) suggested that achievement motivation in school settings has three components: a cognitive drive which is task-oriented (the need to know), an ego-enhancing component concerned with achievement as a source of primary or earned status, and an affiliative component, oriented towards achievement as a way of ensuring continued status. He pointed out that varying proportions of these components are normally represented in achievement-motivation, depending on a number of variables including culture and ethnic origin.

Many schools emphasize the first two of Ausubel's components - the cognitive drive and the ego-enhancing drive. These motives are not, however, strongly characteristic of a significant proportion of some minority groups; in their case it is often the need for affiliation which is the regnant

motive. If the school makes no attempt to engage this affiliative motive at least initially in the service of classroom learning many youngsters fail to find sources of satisfaction in the classroom and the discontinuities between their in-school and out-of-school lives are heightened.

(iii) LINGUISTIC SYSTEM

The linguistic system of the school is primarily what Bernstein (1970) has called the elaborated code, that is, a code oriented towards receiving and offering universalistic meanings, a code where the speaker makes his intentions explicit verbally, a code that requires a longer time dimension of verbal planning. This is the language of teacher and of text book.

In the past, (and, indeed, in the present) some schools have reacted adversely to the inability of certain groups of children (e.g. inner-city Blacks) to speak standard English. Linguists, psycholinguists and sociolinguists have recently been concerned to emphasize the linguisitic integrity of the various dialects.

Thus, for some children there is a discontinuity between home and school in linguistic system, in orientation towards the use of language and in the form of social relations in which the language system is rooted.

(iv) COGNITIVE STYLE

The research literature of the 40's, 50's and 60's documents the lower I.Q., the below-average school performance, the high illiteracy rates, the high drop-out rates among many of the culturally different groups, especially those where a majority of the members live in depressed socio-economic conditions.

Explanations of these limited achievements have been sought in the home circumstances of the children.

Factors within the home are undoubtedly obstacles to the academic progress of many children. But it may be that these 'explanations' are too simplistic in their approach. They focus on discontinuities between home and school, but in a one-sided fashion: the home does not promote the development of abilities the school believes important. But does not the home promote

the development of other abilities? What are these other abilities and why does the school not make use of them?

The school favours the abstract, conceptual style. Studies have shown that some culturally different groups develop different cognitive styles. Differences, documented with varying degrees of precision, include, for example, impulsivity vs. reflection, less abstract conceptualization and categorization of stimuli, more concreteness and inflexibility in intellectual functioning, motoric preference.

The child's cognitive style determines his utilization of his intellectual abilities:

> " Styles of categorization may be an important intellectual dimension to determine how intelligence operates. An individual's 'style' dictates the cues he will use, but not necessarily determines the level on which he performs. The style of categorization sets the direction but not the level on which an individual's intelligence might function." (Sigel, 1963).

If the school does not capitalize on the culturally different child's preferred cognitive style, the result may be underperformance. An increasing number of theorists express the view that culturally different children are often judged as incompetent, whereas, in reality, it is their performance, not their competence, which is deficient. The gap between competence and performance is attributed to inappropriate situational cues - inappropriate because they fail to stimulate the child to action. (Wallace, 1967; Labov, 1970; Cole and Bruner, 1972).

A further area of home/school discontinuity for the culturally different child lies in the types of experiences provided at home and in his ensuing store of concepts. These are often very different from those of his middle-class counterpart. They are not in themselves, however, less valid as bases for further learning.

COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF HOME AND SCHOOL

The discontinuities between school and home described above indicate the urgent necessity for the involvement of the home in the children's education. This necessity becomes emphasized when the children concerned

come from a cultural background different from that of the school and the school staff. In the case of middle class majority culture pupils, the school, home and surrounding community share a common set of values, espouse a common set of goals, direct their rewards and sanctions to the same range of behaviours; in short, there is continuing interaction among the three, and each, in broad outline, supports and reinforces the activities of the other two.

The situation is frequently quite otherwise in respect to the culturally different. There is often no such close communion (in the main informal and intuitive) between home and school. In many respects, neither reinforces the activities of the other.

Gordon has presented a detailed rationale for the involvement of parents:

"a) language develops from modelling on significant adults and by exposure in the home before schooling begins, as well as throughout the school year and is not a function of rote recitation;

b) attitudes towards learning are learned primarily at home and the home is thus the central learning place;

c) the parents' self-esteem, attitudes towards school, expectation for success, and provision of experiences influence child performance, attitudes and self-esteem;

d) children learn best when home and school share in the educational experience;

e) children learn best when their own sub-culture is respected and finds potency both in the classroom and in the general operation of the school;

f) parents themselves gain in self-esteem and feelings of competence when they see themselves able to teach their own children, to teach others - both adults and children - and to function as decision-makers in all respects of a program;

g) when parents are actively involved in the education of their children, they will continue to enhance the child's growth and their own activity after the formal program ends. "

(Gordon, 1972: 221)

Grotberg in a recent analysis of institutional responsibilities for early childhood education, argues:

> "....any model being considered for adoption or adaptation should be concerned with the total child and should involve parents.....The degree to which parents participate in both the decision-making process and the educational program of an institution may well determine the level of the effectiveness of the institution." (Grotberg, 1972: 337)

All the evidence available to us today leads to the conclusion that children will make better academic progress when both home and school recognize their need to work productively and harmoniously together. This need for collaboration is even greater, as we have shown above, in the case of minority group than of majority group children; yet, as we shall show, Aboriginal parents and the teachers of their children rarely meet, let alone collaborate.

Havighurst cogently underlines the complementarity of home and school as he writes of an implicit contract between home and school:

> " The parents contract to prepare their child for school entrance, both cognitively and affectively. They further contract to keep him in school and to make home conditions appropriate for his success in school. The school contracts to receive the child, teach him as well as it can, taking account of his strengths and weaknesses and the ways in which he can learn most effectively.
>
> Very little of this contract is put into legal codes, but the education of the child is successful only when both parties carry out their obligations fully. Sometimes one or both parties fail to understand the nature of these obligations.
>
> In the case of the socially disadvantaged parents of this country, nearly all of them fail to meet the terms of the contract. But the schools generally fail also by failing to understand how the children of these families can learn most successfully." (Havighurst 1970).

CHAPTER 2

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES. THE PRESENT SITUATION

So far the issue of parental importance in the educative process has been investigated in general terms. Before discussing the significance of *Aboriginal* parents in the education of their children, the focus needs to be expanded.

Educational attainment, for all its importance, must be seen as one facet of a wider picture. That picture, whose outlines must now be sketched in, concerns the whole complex of life circumstances of Aboriginal families in Australia and the way in which these life circumstances may influence the development of children growing up within the families.

Since the action research project which forms the kernel of this work was concerned with Aboriginal families in an urban setting, it is on such urban families that the analysis which follows will focus.

Before considering the more general cultural and social milieu in which these families move, we shall delineate some of the factors that impinge most closely on their day-to-day lives. Such factors are family structure, size of household, housing, mobility, health, occupational status and its partial determinant, educational attainment. It is these factors that most directly affect the life chances of family members.

1. FAMILY STRUCTURE

Whereas non-Aboriginal Australian households are typically occupied by nuclear families, urban Aboriginal households tend to be somewhat different. Beasley (1970) in her study of Aboriginal families in Sydney, reported that 74% of the 100 nouseholds studied had a single nuclear family as the basis, 18% contained two nuclear families, 7% three nuclear families and 1% a non-nuclear family unit. A Brisbane study (Smith and Biddle, 1975) showed a lower proportion of the sample households (59%) to consist of one family unit; in 17% of the households there were three or more units per household.

The Sydney and Brisbane studies showed too, that a number of Aboriginal households were extended by the presence of relatives. In Sydney, 28% of the persons living in the sample households were kin rather than nuclear family members; in Brisbane the survey found that only 36% of 351 regular family units consisted solely of a full nuclear unit.

Kinship relationships are of continuing importance to Aboriginal households.

> " Among both urban and rural Aborigines in New South Wales, it was certainly customary for people to have large households, for their kin obligations required the provision of hospitality to relatives who might need accommodation. Coming to the city did not free an Aboriginal from such obligations..... . The existing overcrowding was aggravated still further by the more or less frequent arrival of temporary visitors on holiday, attending hospitals in the city, and so on." (Beasley, 1970: 163).

Barwick's (1964) Melbourne study and Gale's (1972) picture of urban Aboriginal life in Adelaide similarly revealed a high proportion of extended families, often including intermittent or continuous streams of visitors.

That this pattern may be changing for some groups, including town and city dwellers, is suggested by more recent data obtained by Watts (1976) in her evaluation of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme. She found that among the 916 families across Australia who were in the sample, only one in six was characterised by the presence of adults other than parents. Location was a discriminating factor. While 37% of the families living on town reserves were extended, the percentages of extended families fell to 19% for town dwellers; 15% for those in cities; 13% for both capital city families and those living in isolated areas on pastoral properties and small mining settlements; and 7% for families on self-contained Aboriginal communities.

2. SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD

Data from some of the studies indicate a larger family size among Aboriginal than among non-Aboriginal groups in urban settings. The Australian average is 2.49 children for incompleted families and

2.66 for completed families (Borrie, 1973). The average number of children per Aboriginal family was estimated by Beasley (1970) to be 3.38 in Sydney, and in Adelaide (Gale, 1972) to be 5.40 for families with two Aboriginal parents and 2.60 for families with only one Aboriginal parent.

Watts (1976) obtained data across Australia on family size, determined by taking account of the number of children born to a family together with other children adopted either legally or more informally, in accordance with the usage of many Aboriginal people when referring to 'family'. She found that in over half of the families (62%) the parent(s) had brought up or were bringing up six or more children. In only 6% of the families did the number of children fall below three. The pattern of family size was associated with both location and occupational status of the students' homes. Very large families of ten or more children were less frequently found in capitals; the frequency increased as one moved from cities, to towns and isolated areas, to town reserves and finally to Aboriginal communities. Only a small proportion of the families in each location had child-rearing responsibility for fewer than three children. Larger families were found more frequently in unskilled and semi-skilled than in skilled or professional homes, while very small families (fewer than three children) were uncharacteristic of each of the three occupational groups.

The size of family, the fairly frequent presence of non-family members and the need to offset high rentals by making maximum use of dwelling space lead to a situation of overcrowding in many Aboriginal homes. The average number of persons per Aboriginal dwelling has been found to be 7.03 in Sydney (Beasley, 1970) and 5.6 in Brisbane (Smith and Biddle, 1975) compared with the Australian average of 3.55.

Gale (1972: 131) in Adelaide found the average density of the Aboriginal population to be at least 1.8 persons per room, often more, compared with 0.6 persons per room for the general South Australian population. The overcrowding is heightened by the relatively small houses often occupied by Aboriginal families.

3. HOUSING

Beasley reported that the range of houses available to this group in Sydney corresponded to the range available to lower income groups of the general Australian population: four-fifths of the homes were cottages or houses. Of these, one-fourth were rated as poor or bad with respect to interior care and maintenance and an equal proportion received the same rating on exterior care and maintenance. In the Perth metropolitan area Schapper (1970) reported two-thirds of the Aboriginal population living in conventional housing, of which at least one-half was substandard.

In the first main Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, Henderson (1975) drew attention to one of the factors underlying the disadvantage in housing suffered by many Aboriginal families.

> " Aboriginals have difficulty in obtaining accommodation in many areas due to discrimination. In the Brisbane study,* for instance, 34% of respondents claimed that discrimination was the main problem in obtaining accommodation. Some private landlords will not rent their properties to Aboriginal people; others charge bonds that prevent Aboriginals entering into accommodation that is both reasonable in price and condition, and they are then forced into using the poorer part of the rental market." (Henderson, 1975: 263).

Home ownership is less frequent among metropolitan Aboriginals than among non-Aboriginals. Gale's Adelaide study showed only a small proportion of Aboriginal families owning or in the process of purchasing their own homes. In Sydney one-fourth of the families owned or were in the process of buying their own homes, in contrast to two-thirds of the non-Aboriginal metropolitan population of New South Wales. In Brisbane Smith and Biddle found a somewhat similar situation: only one-fifth of the Aboriginals owned or were buying their own homes, compared with four-fifths of non-Aboriginals. Smith and Biddle made the additional comment that almost one-fourth of the homes owned or being bought by the Aboriginals were of inadequate structure.

More recent findings cited by Henderson from the Brisbane Survey of Brown et al (1974) suggest that prospects for Aboriginal home ownership

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* (Brown, J.W., Hirschfeld, R. and Smith, D. : Aboriginals and Islanders in Brisbane. A.G.P.S. 1974.)

may actually be diminishing, since in this study only 8% or one-twelfth of the sampled occupants owned or were in the process of buying their homes (as against one-fifth in the Smith and Biddle study). Twelve per cent rented from the Housing Commission and the remainder were in rented accommodation where rents were much higher than in Housing Commission houses (Watts, 1976: 27).

4. MOBILITY

It has been pointed out by Smith and Biddle that while high mobility is commonly believed to be a feature of Aboriginal life, their Brisbane data indicated that this was characteristic of a minority only. In reaching this conclusion, they used a somewhat conservative estimate of mobility, regarding families as not mobile if they had lived in the same or only one other household (53%); mild mobility (family had lived in two or three other places) characterized 33% and some 14% were highly mobile families who had lived in four or more other households.

The data available from Gale's Adelaide study show that the most mobile Aboriginal people were those who lived with relatives or at the time of the survey were in gaol or in accommodation provided by their employers; over 10% of this group had had nine or more addresses in Adelaide. The greatest stability was found to be among those who owned or were buying their homes. Among this group, no children under fifteen years of age had lived at more than two addresses in Adelaide. Though many of the adults in these families had shown a high degree of mobility after arriving in the city, moving from one rental house to the other, the pattern was one of almost complete stability after a house was bought. Intermediate between home owners and those living with relatives in respect to degree of mobility, were the Aboriginal families living in rented houses.

Lickiss (1971), in her study of the households of 120 children resident in Sydney, explored some of the motivations accompanying the high residential mobility.

> " Moving house was precipitated by difficulties with landlords (often concerning rent, less often household behaviour), availability of more suitable accommodation (cheaper, better, nearer work or closer to relatives), domestic crises within the urban household or in the country area of origin necessitating return, or difficulties with various community

> legal, health, or welfare agencies (movement as an evasive tactic). In one case a neighbourhood petition was lodged to try to force an Aboriginal household to move on the grounds of unsatisfactory living standards - it was true that there was periodic overcrowding in this household because of the extraordinarily generous attitude of the woman who was head ('I can't turn a boy or a girl from my own town away, if they have no place to sleep for the night, now can I?') - a clear case of conflict of what she regarded as the inviolable demands of kindness, loyalty and hospitality with the demands of urban housing standards. (More serious charges levelled against this household were quite untrue and indicated a serious level of neighbourhood racial prejudice.)" (Lickiss, 1971: 205).

5. HEALTH

Lickiss' Sydney study gives a picture of the health of Aboriginal mothers in her sample. Five of the 28 mothers on whom personal information was available and two grandmothers were under treatment for serious illness. Furthermore, she reported that psychological disturbance was common in the mothers.

> " Mothers spoke of the stresses of city life; they recognized urban life as a present economic necessity but most insisted that child rearing is more difficult. Worry about 'the boys getting into trouble' was commonly expressed; some women blamed the 'distractions' of city life for weakened parental authority; others resented overcrowding. Some mentioned the stress of racial discrimination directed towards their children.
>
> In general, it appeared possible that environmental factors, including urban living, contributed to the psychological malaise of many of the women, but data on previous personality patterns were rarely available." (Lickiss, 1971: 212).

The children's nutritional status was, on the whole, less than optimal - she reported marginal intake of protein and vitamins in several households, and the probability of deficiency in calorie intake in some cases.

Gale has drawn attention to the role of ill-health in bringing many rural Aborigines to the city. Twelve per cent of the individuals in her study who had come to Adelaide and had remained there for more than six months had come for medical reasons. Moreover, because of the strength of kinship ties, a whole family often moved to the city because of the medical needs of one of its members.

Gale reported a high rate of sickness among the urban Aboriginal population of Adelaide, 23% of her sample being admitted to hospital during the period of the study, with, she suggests, consequent effects upon employment opportunities for the adults and educational opportunities for the children.

In her samples, over a three-year period, one in ten of all the children under fifteen years and almost one in seven of those under four years spent periods of over one month in hospital. A further one in twelve of all the children under fifteen years went to hospital for one or more periods of less than one month. Admissions were most frequently for respiratory infections, pneumonia, gastro-enteritis and ear infections. Gale sees a vital link between socio-economic factors and ill-health, with over-crowding, under-nutrition and poor hygiene as contributory factors. She finds the situation serious on several counts:

> " The high rate of sickness involving long-term hospitalization amongst children under fifteen years must mean that the education of this group is interrupted or impaired. A lack of education, in its turn, will adversely affect their economic prospects in the future.
>
> Further, the separation of a child from parents and family, particularly at a young age, is regarded by most authorities as having serious effects upon the child's emotional development. Therefore it seems unfortunate that a major proportion of the hospital admissions amongst Aboriginal children in the younger age groups, should be for comparatively long periods of hospitalization." (Gale, 1972: 199-200).

The Report on the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme details further consequences of the ways in which Aboriginal families suffer in the area of health:

> " The health of the family indirectly affects the school performance of students. Recurring illnesses cause stress for family members; parents are less well able, in conditions of ill-health, to enact the parenting role; expenses incurred by illnesses are a major threat to precarious finances and hence an additional cause of strain and anxiety; illnesses of family members, particularly of younger children, often mean long waits at outpatients' departments and are thus likely to lead to the secondary student staying home from school to help in such circumstances. The student's own health and nutritional status of course affect both his attendance at school and the energy

> available for mobilization in the service of school learning. Furthermore, children and adolescents who are frequently ill or not functioning at an optimal level sometimes have diminished feelings of self-regard and form negative judgments about their own competence." (Watts, 1976: 20).

Hetzel, summarizing the findings of a national seminar in 1972 of health services for Aboriginals, referred, like Gale, to the widespread incidence in this population of infant and toddler gastro-enteritis, respiratory infection and malnutrition, the prominence of pneumonia associated with overcrowded living conditions, and the prevalence of chronic bronchitis, chronic ear disease (resulting in significant degrees of hearing loss among children). He concluded:

> " There can be no dispute with the facts indicating the deplorable state of the health of the Aboriginal people. The accepted indicators of health used by the World Health Organization - infant mortality and crude mortality - are grossly elevated in comparison with the white population of Australia, while life expectancy is correspondingly much shorter." (Hetzel, 1974: 243).

In this dismal situation, important urban-rural differences should not be overlooked. While Gale, as we have seen, has drawn attention to the high incidence of illness among Aboriginal families in the city, particularly among young children, she has pointed out that the situation is still worse in rural areas:

> " It seems that the urban setting, in which better jobs, housing, and sanitation are available, along with readily available medical services and out-patients' clinics, have prevented among urban Aborigines the occurrence of the more serious illnesses prevalent amongst rural Aborigines. This does not mean that Aborigines in the city are as healthy as their white counterparts. They are still affected by poverty and insufficient medical attention. This study has merely shown that, by and large, urban Aborigines are healthier than rural Aborigines." (Gale, 1972: 203).

6. OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

Significant proportions of urban Aboriginals tend to be employed at jobs at or near the lower end of the socio-economic scale. The Brisbane study by Smith and Biddle revealed that approximately 87% of those working had jobs classified in the three lowest ranking categories on an eight-category scale. This scale orders Australian occupations by both skill

level and prestige. Approximately 93% held jobs in the four lowest categories; the comparable figure for all Australian workers in 1961 was 51%.

In her Sydney sample Beasley also found a majority of the Aboriginal men (approximately 80%) working in unskilled occupations such as general labour and factory work. She found a similar picture for Aboriginal women: 47% in predominantly unskilled, full-time factory employment, 13% in domestic work, but only 9% in full-time sales or clerical work.

Figures from the 1971 Census confirm the general employment picture across Australia. This shows most Aboriginals to be employees rather than employers, to be characteristically in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations, and to suffer a higher unemployment rate than the general Australian population. (See Table II.1).

In Watts' study (1976), in only one-third of the 916 Aboriginal households was there a parent working at the semi-skilled, skilled or higher levels. The sample revealed occupation to be associated with both location and family size; the highest proportion of parents in skilled or professional occupations (36%) being found in capital cities, and under half of all the skilled or professional parents having families of six or more children (compared with over two-thirds of semi-skilled, unskilled, pensioner or unemployed parents).

7. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS

In the interweaving of factors that go to make up the web of life circumstances of many urban Aboriginal families, educational attainment has been mentioned already several times in the preceding sections. Conditions of housing and health, for example, may strongly influence the educational achievements of children and the capacity for involvement of parents; in turn, educational achievements have consequences for occupational opportunities and for life style.

Data from earlier studies show that among the Aboriginal adults, attained educational levels are, in general, extremely low. The Brisbane

Table II.1

Comparison of Occupational Status of Aboriginals and Total Australian Population*

(a) The Population 15 years of age and over by Occupational status - Percentage distribution, Australia, Census 30 June, 1971

	The Aboriginal Population			Total Australian Population		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Employer	0.3	0.1	0.2	4.8	1.3	3.1
Own-Account Worker	1.7	0.3	1.0	6.6	1.7	4.2
Wage or Salary Earner	58.2	21.0	39.9	67.5	32.8	50.1
Unpaid Helper	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.4
TOTAL EMPLOYED	60.4	21.6	41.3	79.1	36.3	57.7
Looking for First Job	0.9	0.6	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2
Other Unemployed	5.5	1.4	3.5	1.0	0.6	0.8
TOTAL UNEMPLOYED	6.4	1.9	4.2	1.2	0.8	1.0
TOTAL IN LABOUR FORCE	66.9	23.6	45.6	80.3	37.1	58.7
TOTAL NOT IN LABOUR FORCE	33.1	76.4	54.4	19.7	62.9	41.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(b) The Employed Population 15 years of age and over by Occupation - Percentage distribution, Australia, Census 30 June, 1971

	The Aboriginal Population			Total Australian Population		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Professional, Technical and Related Workers	1.6	4.8	2.4	8.6	13.7	10.2
Administrative, Executive, Managerial Workers	0.7	0.4	0.6	8.6	2.5	6.7
Clerical Workers	1.3	8.0	3.1	8.4	32.0	15.8
Sales Workers	1.3	4.4	2.1	6.1	12.3	8.1
Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Timber Getters, etc.	32.8	5.8	25.8	9.5	3.8	7.7
Miners, Quarrymen, Related Workers	2.6	0.3	2.0	0.9	0.0	0.6
Workers in Transport and Communication	5.5	1.5	4.5	7.0	2.4	5.5
Tradesmen, Production Process Workers, Labourers	42.6	13.8	35.2	40.6	13.5	32.1
Service, Sport and Recreation Workers	3.7	50.5	15.7	4.0	14.7	7.4
Members of Armed Services	0.8	0.1	0.6	1.7	0.2	1.2
Occupation Inadequately Described or not stated	7.0	10.5	7.9	4.5	4.8	4.[illegible]
TOTAL EMPLOYED	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Bureau of Census and Statistics 1971 Census of Population and Housing, The Aboriginal Population, Tables 26 and 27.

study of Aboriginal adults and young people from 431 households in 1965-1966 revealed that 2.8 % had received no schooling, 19% had been educated only to the fourth grade, and a further 65.8% had not proceeded beyond primary school. Beasley's 1970 survey of Aboriginals in Sydney over the age of 15 years revealed a somewhat similar pattern: one-third had attended primary school only; two-fifths had attended secondary school but had not gained the Intermediate Certificate awarded at the successful completion of the third year of high school. The educational level of 13.6% of the sample was unknown; if this information had been available, the proportion who had attended primary school only would probably have been larger.

Both surveys were conducted with populations currently living in metropolitan areas in which access to schools, particularly at the secondary level, is easier. Although both Smith and Biddle's and Beasley's samples included adults who had migrated to the city from country areas, significant numbers in each sample (approximately 20 and 50%, respectively) were nonmigrants. One might expect lower educational standards to obtain among Aboriginal adults who had grown up in country areas. Schapper's report on Western Australia's Aboriginal population in 1966, predominantly rural, supports this expectation.

In the Brisbane and Sydney studies, examination of the school achievement levels of younger Aboriginals shows that their achievements are somewhat higher than those of their elders; for example, in Beasley's sample the people who had attended secondary school were mainly under 40 and those who had achieved the Intermediate Certificate were mostly under 30. In Smith and Biddle's Brisbane sample it was found that at every decade, as age increased, the amount of education decreased.

The 1971 Census statistics confirm the pattern of Aboriginal disadvantage in attained level of schooling relative to the general population. These figures show that while less than 1% of the total Australian population had never attended school, this contrasts with almost one-quarter of the Aboriginal population. Of those who did not proceed beyond primary school, almost half of the Aboriginals did not enter the final two years of the primary school; the contrasting proportion for the

total population was 16%. At the secondary level and higher, 3.5% of the Aboriginals went on to senior secondary and post-secondary education, compared with 29.6% of the total Australian population.

The differential decrease in the holding power of the secondary school from earlier to later years is perhaps brought out more clearly if enrolments of students at the senior secondary and post-secondary stages are expressed as percentages of those enrolling in the first year of secondary school. Thus of all those who enrolled in the first year of secondary school, 60% of the total Australian population were still at school in the senior grades, compared with 12% of the Aboriginal students; and 52% of the total population who entered secondary school were undertaking post-secondary courses as against 5% of the Aboriginal students. (Watts, 1976: 16).

Watts' findings indicate that among the sample of 916 Aboriginal secondary students across Australia, only 15% had fathers and 18% had mothers who had had secondary or higher education. Differences between states in this respect are marked. Thus, taking account of the parent with the higher level of schooling, the following percentages of parents of sampled secondary school students had either received no formal schooling or had attended primary school only: in Queensland: 83%; in New South Wales: 61%; Tasmania: 71% (Watts, 1976: 31).

There are marked differences in the educational levels of the parents of these Aboriginal secondary students, when family location is taken into account. The comparative advantage, in terms of parental education, of being brought up in an urban setting is borne out by the higher proportion, in all states, of capital city parents who had received some secondary education (39% in Queensland; 59% in New South Wales; 37% in Western Australia and 55% in South Australia), while the comparable figures for parents living in towns were Queensland: 15%; New South Wales: 33%; Western Australia and South Australia: 14%. Frequency of parental secondary schooling decreased sharply in isolated areas, town reserves and Aboriginal communities.

When we turn from school levels reached to actual school achievements, some recent studies present a disturbing picture. In Western Australia, Tannock and Judge (1975) analysed the judgments of 257 school principals and 1755 teachers about themselves and the 4309 Aboriginal children they were educating.

At the primary level, the teachers' assessments consistently indicated that the Aboriginal children's achievement was substantially below the level considered average for white children, in all but the non-academic curriculum areas. This was especially so in areas of basic intellectual skills in reading, in oral and written language use, and in mathematics.

The picture at the secondary level was equally discouraging, the Aboriginal secondary student falling behind his white peers in academic achievement, assessed by his teachers as "having considerably less capacity and performance in the vital skill areas associated with reading and communication." (Tannock and Judge, 1975: 89).

From the South Australian Department of Education comes a similar comment:

> " The lack of motivation and achievement of Aboriginal students has been observed continuously from the time that secondary education has been available to them." (Binnion, 1976; 9).

Watts (1976) evaluated student school achievement in terms of the schools' internal assessment, noting that this procedure precluded absolute or between state comparisons, since assessment policies vary. It was possible, however, to categorise the Aboriginal students as either higher achievers (those whose performance judged by internal assessment was average or above in the regular classes) or poorer achievers (all students in adapted or modified classes together with those in regular classes with below average achievement). In those states which make extensive use of adapted classes, about a quarter of the students from Queensland, a third of those from Western Australia, and just under half of the New South Wales students were achieving at least average results in regular classes. But the percentage of students in regular classes who were assessed by the internal procedures of the schools as performing at an

above average level was much smaller: some 8% overall, across Australia.

Watts concluded:

> " It can reasonably be inferred that many of the students are not achieving satisfactory levels of academic achievement compared with the total Australian population of secondary school students. A minority is however doing extremely well and, as always, there is a sizeable group whose academic achievements are satisfactory within their systems, though not outstanding." (Watts, 1976: 76).

SUMMARY

So far we have been discussing a number of factors which exert a direct press on the daily lives of many Aboriginal families, factors whose interrelatedness is brought out in Appleyard's (1968) summing up of the way of life of many Aboriginals:

> " Like many minority groups, Aboriginal workers are economically underprivileged. Most are unskilled, poorly paid, and subject to periods of seasonal unemployment and, as a consequence, the general economic standard of their communities is poor and includes some individuals who can only be described as poverty-stricken."

Low educational achievement, linked with a typical consequence of employment in labouring and semi-skilled jobs for many, is associated with degrees of poverty, in turn often reflected in high mobility and precarious health. The effects of low wages tend, too, to be exacerbated by inadequate housing and large households.

What is the cultural and social backdrop to this interplay of more direct and cumulative pressures?

Calley is among those who has noted a lack of emphasis among many Aboriginal groups, on competition and material success, an orientation to the present rather than the future:

> " Aborigines do not set store by accumulated material possessions and the forward march of technology that other Australians do. Given sufficient food and some protection from the weather, they are often content to ignore the rat race of modern society, to live for the present." (Calley, 1968: 11).

In Brisbane, Smith and Biddle found 68% of the families in their sample had no savings, 50% held no bank accounts, 75% of the male heads of family units had no life insurance policies, and 74% of the household heads had no insurance policy for possessions.

To what degree is the emphasis on the present as against the future an expression of traditional Aboriginal values, to what extent is it the consequence, rather, of a life lived perforce under conditions which are often precarious, where attitudes must be shaped to permit survival in circumstances where future events appear quite beyond the individual's control?

8. CULTURE AND VALUES

While the Aboriginal population is highly diverse, several studies suggest a number of values that appear to have remained constant within this diversity. Calley for example, writes of the sense of reciprocal obligation that characterises Aboriginal culture:

> " But to the Aborigine, particularly if he is a long way removed from the old way of life.... what makes an Aborigine is willingness to help kin and be helped by them, to live in close day to day contact with them, to emphasize interpersonal relations."

Other studies have pointed to differences between Aboriginal and European orientations to nature:

> " Aboriginal society has traditionally regarded harmony with nature as being of prime importance, whereas white society moulds and changes the environment continually to suit its changing needs. In this context white society is the dominator, and Aboriginal society the dominated. Thus Aborigines are accustomed to sit and 'let the world go by', feeling themselves unable to make changes." (Binnion, 1976: 34).

Sections of non-Aboriginal society at the present time, it need hardly be pointed out, are engaged in a painful reappraisal of this very question, with increasing discussion of issues concerning conservation and the need for a harmonious balance between man and the resources of his environment.

Many of the characteristics to be found in some Aboriginal groups, including some urban groups, are characteristics of the disadvantaged poor, of those who are excluded from the sources of present or future power: low

aspirations, a sense of helplessness, short-term and improvident spending patterns, gambling and drinking (Jessor and Richardson, 1968).

In general, we do not know how far attitudes concerning, for example, the present versus the future, collaboration versus competition, acceptance versus domination of nature may be expressions of Aboriginality, of a traditional orientation (Dawson, 1969), or how far they are reflections of disadvantage in the class hierarchy. We await future studies in which these questions will be explored. To do this, values will need to be tapped among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups of similar social class levels.

It does appear that some changes in traditional values have taken place. Watts (1970), for example, studied the verbally expressed values of Aboriginal mothers and their adolescent daughters in two large government communities in Queensland; the study included control groups of white rural and metropolitan mothers and daughters. Less sharp ethnic differences were found than had been expected. Although as a group the white mothers were more firmly oriented towards the future, as against the present and the past, the two ethnic groups, across both age levels, tended to choose similar orderings on the positions on the value orientations. Among the adolescents, ethnic differences were still less marked, though the white girls expressed a stronger preference than the Aboriginal girls for the future over the present and the past, and for individuality over lineality.

Eckermann's (1973) study of the values of the Aboriginal residents of a Queensland settlement indicated that they identified more closely with whites than with their own group. She concludes:

> "..... that Aborigines see Europeans as more predictable than their own group and.... Europeans more like themselves than other Aborigines. This is a startling development indicating that perhaps Aborigines have internalized derogatory values about themselves, have consequently rejected their own group and identified with what they believe to be European orientations."

A potent concept in the understanding of value changes among minority groups is that of *comparison level*: the appraisal of one's situation not by reference to some absolute standard, but by comparison with that of

others. Dawson (1970) describes comparison level as

> "....a certain 'minimum level of expectations' determined by experience in past relevant situations, experience in present similar situations, assessment of how others are faring in other relevant situations, and perception of relative outcomes for others in alternative situations." (Dawson, 1970: 76).

Dawson discusses the extension of comparison level theory to the study of inter-group relations:

> "...where the comparison level of the minority group is close to that of the majority group, the minority group will be dissatisfied; where the comparison level of the minority group is relatively low, as compared with that of the majority group, the minority group will probably be reasonably content and have a low level of aspiration." (Dawson, 1970: 76).

Dawson investigated the importance ascribed to traditional and western values, and to education and integration in two Aboriginal groups, one rural, one urban. He related his findings to the comparison levels of the respective groups. He found that urbanization, which was accompanied by improved material, educational, occupational and status conditions relative to the rural group, was associated with significantly more favourable attitudes to western values, and to education; and that these attitudes were also associated with a rising comparison level. On attitudes to integration, Dawson's findings were more inconclusive, possibly, he speculates, because the urbanized respondents may have been using a number of his questions about integration to express the increasing hostility to the majority group associated with a rising comparison level.

As urbanization continues, as Aboriginal circumstances improve, so, Dawson postulates, will comparison level continue to rise. Expressions of Aboriginal hostility may well become more marked in the future.

9. SOCIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND WHITE AUSTRALIANS

Mention has been made of Eckermann's findings on the apparent internalization by a group of Aboriginals of the derogatory values held about them by members of the white community. Some of these derogatory beliefs

and attitudes have been documented by Western (1969) in studies carried out in a metropolis, a city and three country towns. The white respondents were substantially in support of Aboriginal rights, but more than 20% of the metropolitan sample and as many as 76% of the country town residents held negative stereotypes of Aboriginals as people, believing that Aboriginals prefer not to mix with whites, that they need protection from their own lack of responsibility, that they are pretty much alike, that white culture is much more advanced, and that Aboriginals expect to get more out of life than white people.

Taft's (1970) study of white Western Australian attitudes towards Aboriginals, conducted in Perth, in a provincial city with a record of racial conflict and in a provincial town with a reputation for harmonious inter-group relations, concluded that:

> " The general stereotype of Aborigines, then, is that of an irresponsible, lazy and dirty slob who has the redeeming features of being a good parent and a friendly, respectful, and generous person." (Taft, 1970: 14)

Correlates of attitudes towards Aboriginals have been explored by a number of investigators. In South Australia Gale (1972) found unfavourable attitudes more marked among residents of small country towns, older and less educated people, and those with depressed economic status. Western, however, in his samples in two southern communities, did not find a clear cut relationship between degree of prejudice and extent of social contact, and emphasizes the complexity of the problem. Taft, similarly unable to relate beliefs concerning the characteristics of Aboriginals to the sex, age, educational or occupational level of those holding the beliefs, considers the influence of community norms to be of great importance, and emphasizes the interaction between personal experience and these norms:

> " The more the behaviour of Aborigines is unacceptable to the White community norms, the more unfavorable the attitudes of the Whites towards them; and, vice versa, the more unfavorable the attitudes of the Whites, the more likely it is that the Aborigines will appear to behave in an unacceptable manner." (Taft, 1970: 49)

There is a dearth of reliable data on the extent of overt prejudice, and its association with discriminatory practices in employment, education, housing, and use of community facilities. But it would be

astonishing if the levels of prejudice documented by Western, Taft, Gale and others were not frequently distorting the expectations Aboriginal and white members of the community bring to their interactions with each other. As one Aboriginal remarked:

> " I must prove myself everywhere I go. If I move into strange communities, White communities, people look at me and think, 'Oh, an Aboriginal person; he's probably a no-hoper' - and I must prove myself. People just do not accept me as a person." (Moriarty, 1969).

Partly, one may suppose, as a result of such feelings of strain and rejection, a perception of what Cawte (1972) refers to as "cultural exclusion", partly as a result of the hostility noted earlier associated with a rising comparison level, there is evidence of low Aboriginal participation in the general life of the community. The level of participation was explored by Smith and Biddle (1975) in their 1965 Brisbane study. Their data on union membership and membership in clubs and other voluntary organizations show only 75% of the males in employment to belong to unions and 77% of the respondents (excluding pre-school children and persons not interviewed) to have no affiliation with clubs or organizations.

In its turn, the relative lack of social interaction at the informal community level as distinguished from the more formalized, role-defined contact in employment or bureaucratic situations, promotes and perpetuates uncertainty among members of both groups. Where situations of contact do occur, members of each group may bring to them expectations based on the norms operating within their own group. Since there are real differences in these norms, contact may lead to further strain, disappointment and confirmation of prejudice.

If social interaction between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals remains generally low, there has been a growth since the early 1960's of strictly Aboriginal associations: cultural, political, sporting. Such groups, which reflect a growing awareness of Aboriginal identity, have received impetus from mass media exposure of similar organizations of minority groups overseas, such as the Black Power movement in the U.S. In Australia, these associations have been increasingly supported and sometimes funded by governments whose stance, formerly assimilationist, has in some cases begun to move towards the espousal of cultural pluralism.

This movement towards the recognition of and pride in Aboriginality has found its most vociferous political voice in the demand for land rights - the seeking of title to former tribal lands. Less dramatic manifestations of the same spirit have been such geographically disparate movements as the drive towards "outstationing" in the outback north of Australia (the move back to tribal communities by formerly dispersed groups), and the planned setting up of a separate Aboriginal community in the inner suburb of Redfern in Sydney.

Aboriginal legal and health agencies, funded or subsidised by governments, with Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal professional staffing, have recently begun to appear, as have voluntary clubs and associations. Gale draws attention both to the strengths and weaknesses of these bodies:

> "....these associations have begun to play an increasingly important political role. In matters affecting Aborigines, few political or administrative decisions are now made without at least some consultation with these Aborigines' groups. And they have shown to an increasingly larger white audience that Aborigines can run their own affairs efficiently and intelligently.
>
> But.....containing few educated members, commanding only limited resources, and hindered by internal conflicts, the voluntary associations have been able to assist in the adjustment of only a minority of Aborigines who have moved to the city. To help the majority would be a mammoth task." (Gale, 1972: 259).

On the wider scene, there are some grounds for optimism. Such bodies as the National Aboriginal Conference and the National Aboriginal Education Committee have begun to put before both people and Government articulated Aboriginal views on a variety of long-term goals, programs and priorities for expenditure.

SUMMARY

Despite some hopeful signs Australia-wide, this overview of factors affecting, in particular, urban Aboriginal families bears out Gale's contention that while "the majority of Aborigines in the city are better housed, better educated, better employed, in better health, and less liable to mental illness or criminal behaviour than their rural counterparts..... they still suffer disadvantage in almost every respect by comparison with the general population." (Gale, 1972:261).

The long-term solution, successful cultural pluralism, involves, as Havighurst and Dreyer (1975) see it:

"1. Mutual appreciation and understanding of every sub-culture by the other ones.

2. Freedom for each sub-culture to practise its culture and socialize its children.

3. Sharing by each group in the economic and civil life of the society."

At present, Australia falls far short of being a successful culturally pluralistic society; to the extent to which it does so fall short, so to that extent will Aboriginal youth be deprived of opportunities for healthy development and for maximum realization of their potentials.

The implications for the education of Aboriginal students are obvious. Efforts to improve access to education, efforts to improve Aboriginal parents' participation in and support of the educational process and efforts by schools to offer programs more effectively and more sensitively are likely to have limited success for students whose energies are sapped and whose creativity is stifled by unsatisfactory living conditions. Broad social programs then are required - and are beginning to be implemented - concurrently with educational reform:

> " There is an obvious need for improvement of housing and neighbourhood facilities; promotion of better mental and physical health; fostering of employment and occupational mobility with training and retraining programs; development of political awareness and increasing minority group participation at all levels of government; raising educational achievements by restructuring school programs; and re-education of both majority and minority group members to promote awareness of their common humanity. Social engineering is unlikely to be effective unless intervention encompasses the total socio-cultural situation of the disadvantaged." (Watts, 1972: 140).

CHAPTER 3

INVOLVEMENT OF ABORIGINAL PARENTS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

In Chapter 1 we have discussed the intuitive agreement that exists between most schools and most middle-class, majority culture parents. The situation, it has been suggested, is very different for many working-class parents, or parents who are members of minority cultures.

Overseas research evidence suggests that the difference lies not so much in basic attitudes to education held by these parents, whose aspirations and expectations of benefits to flow to their children from education may equal or exceed those of their middle-class counterparts. Differences are to be found rather in the delegation by many non-middle-class parents of all educational responsibility to the school, and in their lack both of confidence and feelings of competence in matters of teaching and learning.

In short, many non-middle-class parents feel they have no role to play in the education of their children.

This was the general picture sketched in Chapter 1. Does the evidence confirm its outlines as far as Aboriginal parents in Australia are concerned?

1. BASIC VALUES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION

Mention has been made in the last chapter of differences in a number of values that distinguish traditional Aboriginal culture from non-Aboriginal: the stress, for example, in Aboriginal culture of the present as against the future, of the acceptance of nature rather than man's domination over it, of collaboration rather than competition, of the obligations due to kinship groups. There may also exist differences between some Aboriginal groups and non-Aboriginals in matters of discipline and child-rearing practices, in attitudes to the proper sexual roles of adolescents (Binnion, 1976: 35) and in a whole web of taboos governing the people with whom it is proper to interact, the places that may be visited, the actions that may be performed (O'Brien and Plooij, 1973).

Where non-Aboriginal teachers who are unaware of these cultural differences come in contact with Aboriginal parents, there exists a potent source of discord and also alienation from the school (both on the part of students and parents). Pinpointing this as one of the reasons for parental withdrawal from school involvement, Binnion advances a solution:

> " Probably the most important and most difficult thing which trainee teachers have to learn is respect for the culture and values of students from minority groups. Trainee teachers must come to realise that the values of the students and of their parents are valid, and that one culture is no better than or superior to any other. When student teachers realise this, they can then appreciate the fact that teachers have no right to try and force their values upon students; instead teachers have a responsibility to develop learning experiences which are NOT in conflict with their students' values." (Binnion, 1975: 114).

The extent to which cultural differences play a part in urban Aboriginal parents' attitudes to the school remains largely undocumented; it is one of the questions which should be explored in any future study of the interaction between urbanization, class status and Aboriginal values. Dawson's (1970) study of attitudes towards education in a rural and an urban community does show, as has been mentioned, that the urban parents held significantly more favourable attitudes towards education than the rural parents, who, however, also favoured education.

The Western Australian report on the educational status of Aboriginal children (1975) takes a gloomy view of the likelihood of many Aboriginal parents supporting and encouraging their children at school:

> " Unfortunately, it is probable that many Aboriginal parents, particularly those living in the most deprived situations of all - the town reserves - have been so thoroughly alienated and isolated from the school's value system that they are well past caring. These Aboriginal parents might not see much point in encouraging their children, even if they knew how. It is possible too that some Aboriginal parents, and leaders in the Aboriginal community, will regard schools as we know them with continuing suspicion and distrust because of the basic functions of the school in our social system. Traditionally schools have been prime agencies for the selection and direction of people into various hierarchical levels within the community. They do this, ideally, in a fair way by grading and promoting children on the basis of objectively measured merit. Increasingly educationists and sociologists have argued that the alleged objectivity of this

> sorting process is fictional, and that merit is identified with class membership. The school thus becomes an agency for maintaining social position rather than facilitating social mobility. Given the educational experience of Aboriginal children in Western Australia, it would not be surprising if this cynical view prevailed amongst their parents." (Tannock and Judge, 1975: 98).

By no means so pessimistic a view, however, was expressed by most of the students parents interviewed in an evaluation of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme (Watts, 1976). These parents saw education in general and school achievement in particular as a good thing, a means to enabling their children to get better jobs, to have better lives than they had had. Very few were critical of the school or the teachers.

Parental valuing of school success has been confirmed in other studies of ethnic minorities. Katz (1968) working with Negro elementary school children, Ausubel (1963) in his study of Maoris, Fuchs and Havighurst (1972), in their work with North American Indians, have all reported high educational and vocational aspirations on the part of many parents. Such findings are further corroborated in the project which forms the central subject of this report. Without exception, all thirty-six mothers involved in the project stated their belief that it was important to get a good education in order to get a good job, and many said they wanted their children to have better jobs than their parents.

2. USE OF FACILITIES

That parental belief in education as a generalised good does not, of itself, guarantee meaningful participation in educational services may be illustrated by examining the extent of involvement of urban Aboriginal families in agencies such as pre-schools.

Many educational policy-makers, accepting the importance of early learning as a base for later learning, have come increasingly to support the provision of early childhood services. The expansion of pre-schools in Australia as elsewhere in recent years has been an educational phenomenon. Despite the failure of the proponents of, for example, the early Head-Start programs to demonstrate the effectiveness of pre-school in

preventing later school failure (Halsey, 1971), one of the justifications for pre-school expansion remains the expectation of particular educational benefit for children of disadvantaged groups.

In the past, however, urban Aboriginal families have made little use of available early-childhood services. Scott (1974) e.g. reports that, with increasing efforts to contact Aboriginal families, the number of Aboriginal children attending regular pre-school centres is gradually increasing. It would, however, seem that basically these regular pre-school centres are not attractive to significant numbers of urban Aboriginal families with young children; very few are currently enrolled at such centres in Brisbane.

Even child care centres are not widely used; in one statistical area in Brisbane, where 243 Aboriginal persons live,* not one Aboriginal family, it was reported to us by a community worker, made use in 1974 of any of the three child care centres which had a total enrolment of 150 children.

There are undoubtedly many reasons for this low enrolment at regular pre-school centres.

Some parents are unaware of the potential benefits to their children. They lack any real knowledge of the objectives of the programs and cannot, therefore, see the relevance of the centres to their children. Some would not, if they did have such knowledge, find the goals of the programs consonant with their own child-rearing goals; equally, some would find the pre-school's goals attractive.

Some prefer to have their young children with them in the homes and throughout the daily round of life. Scott says from Victoria:

> "...it was.....known that Aborigines set considerable value on young children being at home with their mothers and being taught by Aborigines." (Scott, 1974: 62).

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* 1971 Census of Population and Housing: The Aboriginal Population.

There are two issues here - the one a preference for having one's young children with one, the other a preference for having them taught by a member of one's own ethnic group.

There are undoubtedly some urban Aboriginal mothers who would want in their child-rearing to emphasize their ethnic identity and to foster in their children a pride in their ancestry and a favourable evaluation of self-as-Aboriginal. Some of this group (but not all) may find the regular pre-schools unattractive because of their primarily white membership (child and adult) and prefer to send their children to an all-Aboriginal pre-school. This would seem to be the case for some Brisbane families. A number of attempts have been made by Aboriginal groups to set up their own kindergartens. The fact that these have not flourished raises a different set of issues; the several attempts to establish them represent a felt need among these families. Secondly, the Inala Save the Children Fund Aboriginal kindergarten in Brisbane* has all its places filled, and a large waiting list. Thirdly, in another suburb of Brisbane, with a considerable Aboriginal population, serious attempts were made by a pre-school adviser to encourage Aboriginal mothers to enrol their children in the pre-school. Lack of success prompted the Creche and Kindergarten Association to send into the area a mobile kindergarten in the hope that mothers would take advantage of the facilities. This attempt also met with little success. The third venture was to set up in the area a second pre-school in a different building for the Aboriginal children. This has met with greater success, its enrolment at the end of 1974 being 17 children (15 Aboriginal and 2 white) aged three to five years.

It is difficult to be sure about the reasons for the attractiveness of these two Centres. Each caters primarily for Aboriginal children but, in addition, each provides transport for picking up the children from their homes and returning them. Regular pre-school centres which are not typically attended by Aboriginal children do not offer such transport and it is not possible therefore to sort out the effects of the two

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* At least 80% of the places in this Kindergarten must be reserved for Aboriginal children.

factors: primarily Aboriginal enrolment and Centre-provided transport.*

A further distinguishing characteristic of these two centres relates to the staff. Although each has a white director, each has also Aboriginal teaching aides.

It must be noted, however, that not all Aboriginal families in the vicinity make use of either of the centres.

A further reason for not using local pre-school facilities for some is "shyness". Many Aboriginal mothers hesitate to take the initiative in using community facilities; their first major use of institutional facilities other than hospitals for their children comes when the children reach school-starting age. This shyness is sometimes attributable to their general feelings of insecurity, sometimes to their limited educational background and/or their experiences of rejection by members of the majority culture which makes it difficult for them to feel able to be fully participating members of the surrounding community, sometimes to their recent arrival in Brisbane and their consequent feelings of loneliness. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as "cultural exclusion."

Cawte, examining stresses, writes of cultural exclusion:

> " It is one of the realities of today's world that the power in a plural (mixed-race) society belongs to certain racial, religious or ethnic groups. At the same time information and desires are being transmitted by every media to semi-literate people who lack the techniques to satisfy their newly acquired wishes. .....These changes focus our attention on the *exclusion* of important sections of the population from complete participation in the culture of the larger society to which they belong. What we need to be alert to, is the impact of *cultural exclusion* on character and illness." (Pulsford and Cawte, 1972: 69).

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* People closely associated with both centres believe the attendance is in fact affected by the transport service provided. In the one case many children live an appreciable distance from the centre; this is not so in the other case.

Although Cawte, in this context, is writing of health in developing countries, this issue is a very real one in urban communities in Australia.

In the case of some families which do not utilize community early childhood services, it is not a question of rejection of a white pre-school or primarily of a desire to have their children close by them. It is, rather, that they do not see the relevance to themselves of such centres. They do not perceive themselves as clients of community services of this type.

For some, child care facilities and pre-school centres are too distant from their homes and public transport too limited for their easy or convenient use. For yet others, personal stresses and strains arising from their life situation or stresses arising from family size and structure and inadequate resources preclude their widening their concern beyond merely surviving.

In summary, we have suggested that there are several groups of urban Aboriginals who do not currently make use of the limited early childhood services that are generally available:

(1) some do not because they prefer to have their children at home with them;

(2) some do not because of factors such as distance and poor transport;

(3) some do not because they prefer to affirm their Aboriginal identity;

(4) some do not because the goals espoused by the services are incompatible with their own child-rearing goals;

(5) some do not because of shyness or perceived cultural exclusion;

(6) some do not because they are unaware of potential benefits to their children and themselves;

(7) some do not because in general they are not oriented to being consumer participants.

In the future, Group (1) may well continue to prefer to have the total responsibility for the early care and education of their children. If this is their choice, it is also their right.

Those families, Group (2), who do not currently use facilities because of factors such as distance and transport might presumably be advantaged by any moves within the general community that lead to the establishment of centres in more suburbs.

If services are developed in line with the recommendations of national Aboriginal consultative bodies, those urban Aborigines in Group (3) will be able to help plan and develop and then utilize all-Aboriginal services.

How the needs of members of the remaining groups might best be met is a question to be taken up in Chapter 4.

3. EXTENT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING

Once children go to school, we have seen that many parents from ethnic minority groups, including many Aboriginal parents, place considerable weight on children's school success. But the parents' actual knowledge of and involvement with school is a different matter.

In Watts' study (1976), of the parents interviewed, 24% reported that they did not have any discussions at home with their student children about matters concerned with school.

About one-third of the students were reported by their parents to lack private space to do homework; 61% of the mothers and 57% of the fathers reported that they did not help their children with their homework; the reason most frequently given was that they felt they could not help.

In the matter of parental support for children's school attendance, in about one-quarter of the families parents said that there were times when they needed to keep the student home from school to help, primarily in times of sickness.

When asked how the students were getting on at school, 19% of the mothers and 25% of the fathers were not able to respond; over one-third of the mothers and nearly half the fathers did not know the names of any of the subjects their children were taking. (In the cities and capitals this

figure was reduced to 25% and 27%) parents in skilled and professional occupations having greater knowledge than those in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs.

When asked how the students were progressing with their studies, about half the parents did not know, most of the other half having some incomplete generalized knowledge:

> " On a number of occasions, if the student were in or near the house, the parent would call out to him to ask him how he was getting on; or some would say: 'You ask him, he'll tell you,' or 'I have his report card somewhere - I'll get it for you to look at.' " (Watts, 1976: 65).

When asked about the extent of their contact with the school, four in every ten parents reported some contact, though for three out of these four, the contact was said to be only occasional, varying in purpose from attendance at school functions, helping, (e.g. at tuckshop or as a teacher's aide) to visits to discuss student progress or behaviour. A number reported the sending of notes home by the school, the communication being always problem-oriented, concerning student behaviour or attendance.

When asked how much contact they had with the teachers from their children's school, 70% replied that they had not met the teachers; for most of the remainder it was only occasional contact. Only about 5% of parents reported frequent meetings with teachers.

This picture of highly infrequent contact between parents and teachers finds its mirror image in the response made by the teachers of the children in the sample when they were asked to compare the family support and encouragement given to their Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pupils. Two-thirds of the teachers failed to provide a comment. Of those who did comment, more than half made a comparison unfavourable to the Aboriginal parents; only 6% reported that for both groups of students there was good parental support and encouragement.

From Western Australia Tannock and Judge (1975) report similar teacher responses:

> " Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of the education of Aboriginal secondary students is the almost total absence

> of relationship between the school and the home. Virtually no contact of a meaningful nature exists between parents and teachers or principals. It is difficult to imagine a more damaging situation with respect to the educational progress of such a disadvantaged group of children. Of course there are many reasons for it, some of which appear at first sight unavoidable. For example, many children are from families which live long distances from the school. Also, Aboriginal families in some areas are noted for their residential instability. This, combined with the extremely high turnover rate amongst teachers and principals, makes lack of regular contact difficult to avoid. Nevertheless, despite such explanations, the simple fact remains that there is an appallingly low level of contact and relationship between the Aboriginal home and the secondary school. Yet it is a problem for which partial solutions are apparent. It is quite obvious that changes in school organization and procedures, the provision of specialist support staff, parent education programs, and new approaches to staffing and promotion in particular schools would offer much in meeting this deep and urgent problem. However, the most important step is the most difficult: changing attitudes amongst education authorities, principals and teachers." (Tannock and Judge, 1975: 90).

Some of the antecedents and sorry cumulative consequences of this situation are pithily described by Binnion (1975) who brings out the extent to which the experience of many Aboriginal parents does indeed conform to that of overseas minority group parents:

> " Aboriginal people are always being "told what to do", by government officials, reserve officials and, at school, by teachers. Those who do the telling are "them" or the "boss" and those being told are "us". Consequently with regard to education, Aboriginal parents assume that the teachers know and that educational decisions should be made by the teachers. At the same time, however, they resent teachers making these decisions. The Aboriginal parents have also mistakenly assumed that they have nothing educationally valid to offer their children so they shun the school and teachers because of shame and embarrassment. The teachers have then been found mistakenly to interpret the parents' absence from school as follows:
>
> (a) parents do not care about their children;
> (b) parents resent the school;
> (c) parents resent teachers because they are 'upper class';
> (d) parents have no long-range concerns so they go to the school only when there is trouble. "
>
> (Binnion, 1975: 36).

The extent to which schools, to date, have contributed to what amounts to a mutual failure in understanding and support is further summarised in

the evaluative report on the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme:

> " Traditionally, in Australia, school systems have done little to involve parents, to help them realize the importance to their children of their active and informed interest in matters educational. School and the social system in general have made a major contribution to the myth that education is the school's business and have been remarkedly inactive in promoting opportunities to help parents, particularly minority parents, to understand the educational process, to be fully cognisant of the opportunities education can offer to individuals, and indeed, to be fully aware of their children's progress and alert to the significance of this progress for their aspirations for their children's future. Meaningful discussions between the school people and minority parents and students seem remarkably rare.
>
> Neither have the schools sought to help parents to understand the vital role they the parents play in supporting, encouraging and stimulating the students. It is true that many of the parents have had limited opportunities. It is not true, however, as a result, that they have little contribution to make to their children's school progress.
>
> As a result of the inactivity of schools and others in engaging the parents in meaningful discussions about the education of their children, many parents, while valuing education as a general good, have not developed views and standpoints on a number of highly significant issues, and do not realize the ways in which they can help their children achieve their aspirations; the result is that many parents do not offer their children the support they need if they are to derive full benefit from what the schools can offer." (Watts, 1976: 48).

CHAPTER 4

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

The recognition that many parents from minority groups participate very little in school processes has led educators to varying approaches in their efforts to ensure educational progress for the children of these families.

Some educators have traditionally taken the view that the school must overcome the deficiencies of the home in order that the children can progress. This view finds frequent educational expression in planning for Aboriginal education in Australia. Thus the children's defects are emphasized, a remedial orientation is taken to their educational needs and emphasis (in policy and in financing) is concentrated on within-school programs. An analysis of Schools Commission funding, under its Disadvantaged Schools Program, shows this emphasis very much to the fore.

This emphasis on deficits and remediation is doubly unfortunate:

a) it denigrates in the child's eyes his home and culture;
b) in view of the greater potency of the home than the school as an influence on the child it is unlikely to be successful in the short term or in the long term.

This is not to deny the urgent need for changes in the school: teaching strategies which focus on the Aboriginal children's preferred modes of learning must be developed; curricula must relate to the out-of-school learnings of the child; curricula must recognize and respect the Aboriginal child's culture; the school day must be conducted in such a way as to promote Aboriginal self-respect and confirmation of Aboriginal identity; teachers must be trained to respect and value their Aboriginal pupils, to see themselves as accountable for Aboriginal student progress.

However, if all endeavours are confined to the children and to within-school programs, relatively little success is likely, since the gap between the school and the home will remain unbridged. Where that gap continues to prevail, so also will its likely consequences:

a. a lack of understanding by parents of the goals of the school program, its curriculum and its methodology, its relevance to the children's futures;

b. a lack of understanding by the teachers of the home circumstances of the pupils, of parental aspirations for the children, of the nature and extent of the children's out-of-school learnings;

c. an alienation of the child from the school, and perhaps from the mainstream culture, in view of its perceived irrelevance to his life, and a diminished self-concept.

d. an alienation of the cultural minority from the institutions of the mainstream culture (including the school) and a perpetuation of their socio-economic disadvantage.

Some schools have attempted to close the communication gap between home and school by inviting parents to formal functions at the school. A typical approach in the past has been to hold open days at the school, during which parents are free to visit the school and observe its on-going activities. There are limited advantages to this approach: teachers and pupils are conscious of the sudden influx of appreciable numbers of visitors; parents do not have an opportunity to see closely the on-going work or to have any detailed discussions with teachers. Above all, many disadvantaged parents do not accept the open invitation.

For example, as we saw in Chapter 3, some 70% of a sample of parents of Aboriginal secondary students across Australia reported that they had not met their children's teachers; only 5% reported meetings of any frequency. In Western Australia, 203 principals of primary schools enrolling Aboriginal children were asked how many parents of their Aboriginal pupils took part in activities of the Parents and Citizens Association or other voluntary school committees. Only three of the principals reported that there were more than ten such parents so involved, while 35 principals reported that between one and ten Aboriginal parents attended school meetings. Of fifty Western Australian secondary schools with Aboriginal enrolments, only one school reported any committee attendance by Aboriginal parents (Tannock and Judge, 1975).

In Chapter 3 we have discussed a number of possible reasons for the reluctance of these parents to respond to formal school approaches.

In order to reduce the gap between home and school, and its all too frequent consequences, more fruitful ways must be pursued in order to encourage parents to participate, along with teachers, in the education of their children. Some of the ways are outlined in the sections that follow.

a) PARENTS TO SCHOOL - INFORMAL APPROACHES.

Though formal approaches to parents to attend school meetings are likely, so the evidence suggests, to meet little response from the very parents with whom the schools' need for contact is greatest, a number of less formal attempts to attract parents to school have proved far more successful. Such approaches follow the recommendation of Midwinter (1973) that:

> "...all would be well advised to follow the path of natural evolution from informal and indirect communion, via social interrelation, to participation."

Some examples from British schools demonstrate the imaginative means by which some teachers have been able to involve, rather than exclude, their pupils' parents :

(i) The headmistress of one infants' school built on the fact that in Britain many parents come to the school to pick up their youngest children from the nursery class and have half an hour to wait for their older children in infants' classes. To fill this gap, the headmistress instituted a regular cup of tea, served in the school assembly room. From this grew a special weekly morning assembly for parents as well as children, followed by morning tea. The relationships built from these relaxed contacts made it possible for the head, a trained dance exponent, to form a movement group for the most withdrawn or difficult of the children. When she issued a personal invitation to the mothers of these children to come each week, during schooling, to help their children in the group, the response, often from mothers in the most depressed circumstances, was so high, and the benefit they perceived so great, that there later came a spontaneous request from the group for a Mothers' Keep-Fit class. These mothers had come to see the school as a source of growth for themselves as well as for their children.

(ii) An infants' school with a high proportion of immigrant pupils featured a colourful corridor display of life-size pictures that the children had drawn of themselves. Details of colouring and clothing had been supplied by the mothers who had been persuaded to come to school especially to advise teachers

and children on national dress - Indian saris, Chinese suits, Nigerian robes. Some mothers had also brought pictures of their countries to decorate the walls. The teacher's caption read: "Children at our school come from many different countries. We are learning about all these countries."

In this school the teachers were concerned to widen the audience for facets of other and unfamiliar lives and cultures. They demonstrated to the minority group families that they were genuinely interested in and valued these differences, seeing them as adding to the interest and variety of school life.

Furthermore, they were calling on parents not as mere extra pairs of hands, but as valued collaborators, resource people with special knowledge that could help both teachers and children. The sense of worth of both children and parents must thereby have been enhanced.

(iii) A number of schools, again with high immigrant numbers, operate "Saturday" or supplementary schools. In some of these, parents come to learn English from the teachers while their children attend classes in other subjects: in other schools, both parents and teachers help to instruct the children in a range of activities, from academic work to knitting and chess.

In such classes where teachers and parents co-operate, the parents may be acting either as learners or as teachers. In whichever capacity, whether learning or teaching, they are fulfilling for their children the vital role of parents as supporters.

In the field of Aboriginal education, various attempts, attended with a marked degree of success, have been instituted to attract Aboriginal parents to school. For example, a perusal of recent articles in *The Aboriginal Child at School - a National Journal for Teachers of Aboriginals*, indicates teacher awareness (among some teachers and administrators) of the need for parental involvement (Cook, 2,5, 1974; Dowsett, 2,5, 1974; Steinle 2,4, 1974; Lister, 2,4, 1974; Dwyer, 2,1, 1974; Nugent, 3, 2, 1975; Brennan, 3, 2, 1975; Binnion, 4,1, 1976) Kennedy and Ling, 5,2, 1977).

Parents have been involved in the preparation of school lunches, with favourable outcomes in children's attitudes, behaviour, attendance and performance (Mounsey, 2,5, 1974); they have attended pre-school sessions (Barrs,2,2,74; Matthews, 1,4 73.) It has proved possible, in a country town, to encourage

Aboriginal parents to join in community functions located at the school (Manwarring, 1,4 1973). In one school, an Aboriginal Home Visitor contacts parents on a regular basis to discuss their children's progress, inform them of school matters, and encourage them to visit the school (Kennedy and Ling, 5,2, 1977).

Measures such as these which bring parents to the school are likely to lead parents to a more informed understanding of the school and its program, and are likely to help teachers to a greater understanding of the parents and their viewpoint. The increase in teacher and parent understanding should, in turn, advantage the Aboriginal student.

There has been, in recent years, a growing awareness of the role that Aboriginal adults can play as teaching assistants or resource persons in the school or pre-school. It is probably too early yet to evaluate the outcomes of the employment of these assistants: however, a number of highly favourable reactions have been recorded by schools in the journal discussed above:

in South Australia (Cameron, 1,2 1973; Meningie Area School,3,1, 1975);
in Northern Territory (McClay & Bucknall, 1,3, 1973);
in Queensland (Matthews, 1,4, 1973; Law, 2,3, 1974; Dyer, 2,5, 1974;
Budby & Young, 4,4, 1976; McIntyre & Clark, 4,5, 1976);
in Western Australia (Buegge, 2,2, 1974);
in New South Wales (Barrs, 2,2, 1974).

The use of community adults as para-professionals is expected to yield many benefits: to the children; to the adults themselves, and to the teachers.

For the children, it is hoped that the breakdown of the barrier between home and school will foster increased motivation and learning; that there will be mitigation of the effects of shyness; and the increase in adult-pupil ratio will create more effective learning situations; that self-esteem and pride in ethnic identity will be fostered as children see their parents playing an important role in their education; and that the increase in achieving role models from within their own community will help to raise aspiration levels.

Benefits to those parents who are involved as teaching aides are postulated as: increased sense of self-respect; motivation and opportunity

to advance their own educational standards; extension of their concept of the parental role, particularly in respect to the encouragement of striving and achieving behaviours.

Teachers, too, are expected to benefit. Through discussion with the teacher and through close interaction with the parents, they are likely to achieve an increased understanding of their pupils and an increased respect for the sub-culture of which their pupils are members.

b) SCHOOL TO PARENTS

Other approaches, within which the movement is from school to home, have been developed to serve the same end: that of increasing effective communication between the two groups of adults who share a complementary responsibility for the welfare of the children. These approaches exhibit a range in the directness of contact.

i) School Publications

Some school systems believe it is important for them to communicate their aims, purposes and procedures to the parents and do so by means of information booklets.

A refinement of this idea is practised by some schools in disadvantaged areas who publish a school magazine for parents. These not only communicate information about the school program, but also include contributions from the children and from the parents themselves. The aim is to create a medium of exchange among the three concerned groups: teachers, parents and pupils. Effective magazines can help the parents to feel a real involvement with *their* school.

Some advocates of this approach emphasize the need for such publications to be well-prepared and well-presented. They believe that, if parents are to be enticed into reading the magazine, its physical presentation and appearance must compete favourably with commercial productions.

ii) Exhibitions

The Director of the Liverpool E.P.A. project (Midwinter, 1973), was concerned to discover ways in which the parents and the community at large could be helped to understand the work of the school. He conceived the idea

of presenting a week-long school exhibition in one of the large department stores. The exhibition was a varied one. There were displays of good average classroom work of the pupils; the playgroup federation advertised itself and its wares, while an adult education counter advertised possible adult courses. An Education Shop was established, stocking leaflets on various aspects of school activities, under the general title of "It's changed since we were at school..."; this Education Shop also ran a mail-answer service for queries that could not be immediately answered. The other major aspect - and a most successful one - was a schedule of 'live' demonstrations each day, covering practically every branch of the school curriculum. The success, judged by attendance figures and parent responses to a questionnaire, was most marked.

iii) Home Visits

Educationists often stress the need for school staffs to visit pupils' homes; they argue that only in this way can the school establish a bridge with the home and that this is the most effective way of helping teachers to understand the home environment which influences and shapes the child. Opportunities for establishing such bridges frequently present themselves in the learning situation.

In one British infants' school, for example, a West Indian child had said that he knew a story like - but not the same as - a folk story familiar to English children. He could not quite remember the story, so the teacher approached his mother and asked if she would tell the story to the class. The mother was too shy to perform in public but willingly told the story at home for the teacher to tape record. Hearing of this, a Nigerian mother offered to tape some Nigerian folk tales for the children. In this way, a collection of stories retold by parents from other lands was beginning to be built up, while teachers extended their own knowledge of the children's homes, and their respect for the parents' expertise.

Similarly, Reiss (1975) has reported on the changes in attitudes of those teachers of Gypsy children who made the effort to visit their pupils' home sites:

> "...teachers who made it a practice to visit the encampment were much more favourably impressed by the travellers' concern for the educational welfare of their children. They pointed to the sacrifices made: care taken with dress and cleaning the children;

> "the carrying of children hundreds of yards over seas of mud so that they should arrive with clean footwear; families who continued to deliver and collect their children in a lorry long after they had been evicted and had moved to a new location nearly ten miles away from the school. A few teachers reported that traveller parents had brought in examples of their craft work - wooden flowers, pegs, model wagons and so on - for exhibition in the school." (Reiss, 1975: 27)

The extent to which a personal approach from the school to the home can result in return visits in the opposite direction is confirmed, in Reiss's report, by the results of a survey taken among head teachers of schools serving Gypsy children. They reported that:

> "...the readiness of traveller parents to visit the school and discuss their children with teachers was directly linked to the extent to which there was a close contact with the site." (Reiss, 1975: 27)

Some educationists, however, are not fully in support of the idea of teachers visiting homes. There are two problems which they emphasize. Firstly, teachers are often not trained to conduct such home visits. Secondly, a teacher's major responsibility is to her pupils; as schools are presently constituted, it is not possible for her to teach and to conduct enough home visits to achieve the desired insights at a sufficient depth. The solution is seen in the extension of the roles of the school staff, with the appointment of home-school liaison staff.

The home-school liaison aspect of the teachers' roles would fulfil the following functions:

1. To participate in the teaching program of the school.
2. To work in the homes with the mothers*
   a) to promote their understanding of the objectives, program and strategies of the school;
   b) to extend their understanding of their own role, within the home, in providing optimal conditions for their children's early learning and development;

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* Ideally, fathers too should be involved but it is likely for a variety of reasons that mothers only will become involved.

c) to help them to determine how they might provide, within their existing situation,* additional sources of stimuli to their children (particularly increased mother-child verbal interaction); home and school practices in this regard should be mutually reinforcing;

d) to discuss with them their children's progress, problems and needs; to assist them to develop an active and informed interest in the education and development of their children throughout their school careers;

e) to help them to develop feelings of responsibility for the educational progress of their children;

f) to help them to develop increased feelings of self-competence and self-esteem, as people and as parents;

3. To promote the better adjustment and progress of the children in the school, through

a) extending teacher understanding and knowledge of the culture and home background of the children and their appreciation of and respect for this culture;

b) becoming familiar with the out-of school learnings of the children so that they can ensure each child is ready for new learnings and so that teachers can capitalize on the learnings and interests the children have already achieved.

The first requirement of the home-school liaison position, a certain limited participation in the school teaching program, is stipulated because it is only in this way that the liaison teacher can be sufficiently informed about the program to discuss it and the children's progress with parents. One home-school liaison teacher (in Coventry) whose brief extended to three schools, initiated an interesting variant of this requirement by replacing a formal teaching program with the production, in collaboration with teachers and children, of a newspaper for local distribution. She also collated classwork for community display. Thus in effect she was involved

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* For many, critical elements of the existing situation include strained economic and material circumstances, high family density and over-crowding, single parent households.

in a team teaching situation, which additionally proved a successful base from which to launch contact with parents.

One result of the home visiting carried out by this liaison teacher was the establishment of a number of parent discussion groups, meeting regularly in the school. The importance of having a recognized and welcoming 'home', a Parents' Room, was seen as particularly important.

In this program, one facet of the home-school liaison process, the feeding back into the school of information which might extend teacher understanding of the children, was more difficult to achieve. Demands of time made consultation with classroom teachers difficult to schedule. This liaison teacher recommended that her activities be confined to one school, rather than extending across three. The Bullock Report agrees:

> " We believe that the liaison teacher should essentially be part of the school, and that the best results are to be obtained on this principle, not on the basis of a large 'case-load' across two or more schools." (Bullock, 1975: 73).

Such a provision more readily permits the fostering and consolidation of relationships with other staff members, children and parents. These relationships which lie at the heart of the work of the liaison teacher, were emphasised by the E.P.A. Birmingham group which made reference to three essential qualities: a vocation for this kind of work, willingness to experiment, and a capacity for establishing good personal relations both within the school and outside it, with parents and with other social agencies.

Matthews (1973) has reported on the successful inauguration of a home pre-school liaison program working mainly with Aboriginal parents. In this case the liaison teacher was a member of the white Australian majority group. There are good reasons for ensuring that members of minority groups are attracted to such positions.

Scheinfeld (1969), in discussing a model for fostering developmental families, proposes that there is need for methods which can be carried out by a substantial number of change agents, rather than by just a few highly trained or specially gifted workers. Practical programs of inter-

vention for ethnic minority groups do call for the existence of a substantial number of change agents. Furthermore, on theoretical grounds (e.g. Giammatteo, 1967), it would appear that change agents from within the community itself are likely to be more acceptable and accepting, more understanding, and hence, more successful than members of the dominant culture who come into the minority community as helpers.

Kennedy and Ling (1977) have described a program in which the promotion of links between home and school was carried out, not by a liaison teacher, but by an Aboriginal classroom assistant or aide, working in conjunction with school staff and an advisory teacher. In line with the model proposed above, the aide assisted in the classrooms in the mornings, visiting homes by appointment later in the day. As she was not a teacher, her home visits did not focus on specific classroom programs (except where teachers sent home such information), but on games and toys that children and parents could borrow and play with together. It appears that this visitor, as a community member, was warmly accepted from the beginning by the families whom she contacted. What took more time in this program was to establish rapport with the teachers in whose classrooms she was to work: their initial "wait and see" attitude reportedly changing gradually once they "accepted that I am capable of doing what they ask of me".

Early benefits from the program are described as follows:-

> ".. The parents now feel that they and the children have someone they can relate to in the school.
>
> .. The teachers are now more aware of the parents' interest in their children's school progress and are responding by sending information home.
>
> .. The parents want to know as much as possible about what's happening at school and now feel they have a better idea of what the school is about.
>
> .. Some of the teachers encourage the Aboriginal pupils to show their achievements to Mrs. Kennedy.
>
> .. Some of the teachers enjoy discussing the children's progress informally with Mrs. Kennedy.
>
> .. There have been some occasions when Mrs. Kennedy has been able to relieve tension in the class by informing teachers of situations at home.
>
> The little things that happen on a daily basis seem to us to be the most significant contribution Mrs. Kennedy is making, for example, when Mrs. Kennedy first started,

> it was thought that one child, Cherie, would repeat Grade 1 next year. Mrs. Kennedy has encouraged Cherie's mother to visit the class and suggested encouragement of reading at home. Cherie has now been promoted to the B reading group and her chances of promotion to Grade 2 with her peers are now high." (Kennedy and Ling, 1977: 46).

McIntyre and Clark (1976), a guidance officer and a psychologist, have reported on a variant of the role of Aboriginal classroom assistant in home-school liaison. In a program of guidance and career education, they collaborated closely with two Aboriginal classroom assistants in

> " stimulating parent interest in the school and its goals, increasing parent awareness of the career possibilities open to their children, assisting students to develop a more positive self-concept and encouraging them in their efforts to seek jobs after they leave school." (McIntyre and Clark, 1976: 49).

In recent years, most schools which serve Aboriginal children, have appointed Aboriginal aides to their staff.

The utilization of Aboriginal adults in the classroom represents an advance but we must be wary - the appointment of such aides is but a first stage and if we perpetuate the notion of the minority member as an assistant or an aide to the white, fully qualified worker, then in the long term we will continue to promote the dependence of Aboriginal people upon the non-Aboriginal professionals in the society.

We have described a variety of links between home and school; these have all been school-based. Other approaches emphasize rather procedures which are community-based. Three such approaches are described below.

a) ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY EDUCATION OFFICERS

In the evaluation of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme (Watts, 1976) a proposal was put forward whose aim was to help Aboriginal parents:

".. to understand ways in which they can help their children, even though they themselves may have had limited formal education;

.. to understand the ways in which teachers teach and students learn and thus the true significance of regular attendance, of satisfactory conditions for the completion of homework, of the student's possession of requisite materials and books, of the student's need for access to resource materials, of the student's need to be able to discuss school issues with respected adults outside the school;

.. to understand the evaluation system adopted by the school and hence to have a realistic knowledge of their children's progress;

.. to understand the relationship between school achievement and vocational opportunities;

.. to understand the educational structure and to know the various routes that are open to their children and what might lie at the ends of those several routes;

.. to know about a wide diversity of occupations that are open to youth and to understand something of the various job satisfactions involved so that they may stimulate their children's interests and help them to aspire towards jobs which would make the most of their talents.

The list of understandings could be extended almost indefinitely. The fruit of these understandings, if they are achieved, would be greater support of the student (probably one of the most significant determinants of his progress and aspirations), and for the parents, greater enjoyment of and satisfaction from a new aspect of the parenting role, a greater sense of competence and confidence and a feeling that they can influence events, for their children at least.

Such understandings, too, are a prerequisite to the next step, which I see as a critical step: the step when parents know the educational system well enough to be able to interact with it in such a way as to ensure that it is responsive to them and their children in ways that they desire. At present, in general, Aboriginal and Islander parents accept the education that is offered and the manner of its offering, not because they are content but rather because they are not in a position to see alternatives. With greater knowledge and understanding, they would be in a better position to shape education to their ends, to have an influence in bringing about the changes they desire.

I think the achievement of these goals with parents can be helped only to a certain degree by schools and by visiting education officers and visiting Aboriginal student officers. What is required is a person resident on the local scene, a

person who is available to help parents gradually and meaningfully to extend their understandings and to extend their parenting role.

I believe the person must be a person of the group - an Aboriginal or an Islander. It is more than time that we stopped putting Aboriginal and Islander people in the position always of looking to white people as the sole sources of advice and expertise. Perhaps there could be no greater stimulation to Aboriginal youth in their school endeavours than a strong pride in their own people as the source of advice and expertise about school matters. Additionally, the Aboriginal or Islander knows intuitively[1] the ways of thinking of his own people; he knows their frames of reference and thus he can communicate effectively, and can help people to fit new information meaningfully into their existing knowledge and ideas and thus gradually expand their understanding.

This person might most appropriately be called a *community education adviser*. He[2] would be employed by the Australian Department of Education[3] as an officer concerned with encouraging and facilitating the school progress of Aboriginal or Islander Secondary Grant students through working primarily with the parents. His tasks would be essentially to act as adviser to parents and to help them to create a positive educational tradition for their growing children.

He would work not only with parents but also with students, being available for advice and support. He would work with the school, transmitting positive feedback from school to home and home to school. He would be the community contact, at least the initial contact, for the education officer and for the vocational officer and he would develop support programs as follow-up activities to their visits. He would be a source of information on matters of educational and vocational concern. He would convey to relevant departments the desires of the people in regard to programs when they felt the need for such mediation. Essentially, he would in some respects be enacting the role of a community developer, but his focus would be education.

All these are positive roles. The community education adviser is not a truant officer, not an enforcer of rules

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(1) As indicated later, certain personal qualifications and training are envisaged in addition to his membership of the group.

(2) or she.

(3) The classification and salary scale of the position would need to be determined by the Australian Department of Education and the Public Service Board.

and regulations. He is partly, but not entirely, a liaison person. He is an adviser to the Aboriginal or Islander people of the community on education.

This is a complex set of roles. To be effective in his task the community education adviser would need acceptance by and support from the local school which would need to understand the nature of his role.

Persons to fill such positions would need to be carefully selected and well-trained. My experience in working with Aboriginal adults as parent educators and as research assistants makes me confident that suitable people would be readily located and be attracted to such a task." (Watts, 1976: 238-9)

b) EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT FOR THE FAMILY MAY BE ATTEMPTED, IGNORING THE SCHOOL.

Such an approach has been that of the Aboriginal Family Education Centres in New South Wales, stimulated by Grey (1974), who reported that the emphasis in this program centred on the growth of the individual's self-concept:

"An A.F.E.C. has 6 main functions:

1. organize an environment for children;
2. self-involvement by adults in this environment;
3. development of parent-child relationships;
4. establishment of inter-parental relationships;
5. increase parental self-awareness;
6. strengthen community relationships." (Grey, 1974: 165).

Parent education, at four levels, (practical, technical, background, liaison) was an important component.

Ross (1973) reporting on the project, has presented an evaluation of A.F.E.C. seen both as a family education project and as a beginning social movement. Viewed as a family education project, he reports positively on the fact that any progress is an achievement, given so many obstacles and disabilities: adults emphasize that they have greater understanding and self-acceptance and report a stronger sense of personal and Aboriginal identity; adults report an improved quality in the relationship they offer children; adults are engaged in developing themselves as people and in improving formal skills; field officers have developed remarkably; useful equipment has been designed and is available; and A.F.E.C. is in operation and available. Against these achievements he sets the following: no field

officer has completed training; A.F.E.C. is a mother-child, not a family, education project; some centres have had few or no sessions this year; sessions do not follow the ideal form; the project has not provided for assessment of the effects on children. (Ross, 1973: 50-53).

Ross comments:

> " Lex Gray states.....'categorically that school performance is not our aim, though it can be expected to be a by-product of the work of A.F.E.C.' It follows that the absence of evidence about school performance is not critical to Lex Gray at this stage, although improved school performance seems to be the goal of many mothers who bring children to A.F.E.C." (Ross, 1973: 54).

It has been pointed out that there is evidence world-wide, that many parents of minority groups share with the Aboriginal mothers referred to by Ross the goal of school success for their children.

c) PARENT EDUCATORS

So far we have been considering ways of enabling parents more effectively to carry out the supportive educational role that underpins the child's progress, in our society, once he goes to school and begins to acquire a more sophisticated body of knowledge from a team of specialist teachers. Bronfenbrenner has described the complexity of this role:

> "Of especial importance for sustaining the child's learning in school is the involvement of parents in supporting at home the activities engaged in by the child at school and their participation in activities at school directly affecting their child. The parent, however, need no longer be the child's principal teacher as at earlier stages. Rather he acts as a supporter of the child's learning both in and out of school, but continues to function, and to be identified by school personnel as the primary figure responsible for the child's development as a person." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 56).

In the early years, however, the parental role encompasses far more than support of other teachers. It is then that the *primary* responsibility for the child's development is parental, and increasing numbers of studies (Kagan, 1971; Bruner, 1973) attest the importance for the child's development of interactions between parent and infant, from the very earliest days.

Programs with parents (which might be termed parent education programs) aim to help the parents to become more aware of their parenting role and more competent and confident in its exercise. Such programs recognize and respect the primacy of the parents as teachers, and seek to help them, courteously and respectfully, to develop further their competence as teachers. Sometimes this means helping parents to develop new behaviours in the service of existing child-rearing goals; at other times it involves helping parents to see a wider range of goals than those already perceived.

Among the parents whom this type of approach might be expected to reach are those parents, whom existing community facilities do not reach. In Chapter 3 we discussed a number of groups of Aboriginal parents who do not make use of community services for their pre-school children for at least one of several reasons. Those reasons were that:

the goals espoused by the services are incompatible with their own child-rearing goals;

they experience shyness or perceived cultural exclusion;

they are unaware of potential benefits to their children and themselves;

they are not oriented to being consumer participants.

The proliferation of institutionalized services means that each institution is there for parents to use if they desire, or if they feel able to, or if they know about it and/or its benefits; in other words, direct and self-initiated action is still required.

It seems likely that if there is to be any change among the parents in these groups, an impetus to action will need to come from outside. Their interest will need to be courted, their knowledge of the various alternatives and the possible benefits of each fostered; they will need to be helped to conscious consideration of their child-rearing goals, of their specific aspirations for their children and of how they might best implement these.

Many parents who had limited educational opportunities as young people and whose current life style seems to them relatively divorced from

school learnings, believe they are not capable of helping their young children. A frequent response by Aboriginal mothers to our question: "Do you help him at all with his school work?" is "Oh no! I only went to Grade III." Further discussion of the difference between formal school achievements, on the one hand, and knowledge and competencies developed through experience, on the other, can help such parents to appreciate the fact that they have indeed much assistance to offer to their children. Such appreciation is, of course, contingent not only on their reassessment of themselves but on an understanding of the relevance of their own behaviours to their children's growth and development.

Helping parents firstly, to become aware of their own competence and secondly, to know how to utilize their skills to help create a developmental environment for their children must be major goals of programs which focus on parent/child. As Bronfenbrenner points out:

> ".....there are social forces and educational arrangements that diminish the status and motivation of parents (both mothers and fathers) as the most powerful potential agents for the development of their child. By communicating to the parent that someone else can do it better, that he or she is only an assistant to the expert who is not only more competent but actually does the job, some social agencies, schools, and even intervention programs undermine the principal system that not only stimulates the child's development but can sustain it through the period of childhood and adolescence." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 32).

In the above statement, Bronfenbrenner brings out clearly the priority of the parent-as-teacher. Gray and Klaus (1968), Badger (1971), Bernstein (1970), Hunt (1971), Gordon (1974) and Meyers (1974) are among the many who, along with Bronfenbrenner, argue the need for helping parents to feel competent.

It is possible, in devising a program of parent education, to attempt to impose behaviours representing an alien set of values on the family unit, just as it is possible to do so in creating a program for operation in a pre-school or a day-care centre. However, it is also possible to work with parent/child in the home in such a way as to respect their value system and to offer parents an opportunity to evolve new ways

of interacting with their children that are in fact compatible with their own life style and preferred goals:

> "Yet there is also the reality that the poor value education for their children. Many parents in poor communities respond to programs that direct their attention to the gaining of skills to help their children, without demanding, however subtly, the rejection of all that their experience has taught them. People without power, without a voice in society, may find value in programs that make what they already know visible to them and available for increased facility in their parental and community roles. We can help parents to more competently enable their children's development without imposing irrelevant behavioural standards." (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971: 221-222).

Bronfenbrenner (1974) has undertaken a meticulous review of the effectiveness of early intervention. In his review, Bronfenbrenner concludes that parent intervention alone and pre-school intervention alone have limited benefits; the former may have limited capacity to prepare the child for learning skills and subject matter in a school setting, the latter limited capacity to sustain gains. He points out that each strategy possesses the advantages the other lacks.

He would therefore utilize both strategies:

> "....these facts point to *a phased sequence* in which family-centered intervention is begun when the child is one or two years old and continues to be the primary focus of activity during the early years. Preschool components are not introduced until later, are offered at first only on a reduced basis, but are gradually extended as the child approaches school age. Throughout, however, in keeping with the principal lesson emerging from our analysis, the family is clearly identified and encouraged to function as the primary agent of intervention for the child." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 38).

Although the above is the recommended sequence, he does see gain from parent involvement in the later pre-school years:

> "Although parent involvement in the later preschool years does not by itself produce large gains in mental development, it increases the impact of any subsequent group intervention carried out in school, particularly if a program which enlists the parent in

> support of the child's learning activities is continued into the primary grades.
>
> In contrast, the absence of parent involvement in the preschool period, or the failure to carry over this component into the early grades, reduces the impact of any classroom intervention program, particularly if the latter, by keeping the child for the full day, reduces the time that he might otherwise spend with his parents." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 40).

For those who seek to introduce home-based programs, Bronfenbrenner, in line with his emphasis on the parent as *primary* educator, would recommend that the target be not child alone, nor parent alone, but the parent-child dyad:

> ".....*a home-based program is effective to the extent that the target of intervention is neither the child nor the parent, but the parent-child system.* From the point of view of human development generally, and early intervention in particular, this system is especially important in two respects. First, particularly during the first three years of life, it is the major source of the forces affecting both the rate and stability of the child's development. Second, at least through the preschool years, the system retains its powers to sustain and give momentum to whatever development the child achieves within or outside the family setting. It is as if the child himself had no way of internalizing the processes which foster his growth, whereas the parent-child system does possess this capacity. If so, this fact has obvious and important implications for the design of intervention programs, at least for children in the first five years of life." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 34).

A number of programs across the world have sought to put these ideas into practice. Aspects of some of these will be discussed in later chapters.

A number of Australian programs which focus upon the Aboriginal home, rather than on the school, have been developed.

a) The A.F.E.C. program (Grey. 1974) has already been described.

b) Scott and Derbyshire (1974) developed in Victoria a program in which teachers worked in the home with the child or children, once or twice weekly; the mother (or substitute relative) was at home during the

teacher's visit and invited, though not required, to attend the session. Thus the emphasis was, as Scott and Derbyshire says, on planned teaching sessions for children and informal learning opportunities for parents. The mothers were able to observe what the children were doing in the home teaching sessions and to talk with the teacher, from time to time, about what these activities were intended to help the children learn. At times when home conditions precluded the holding of the teaching situation within the home, the teacher took children for sessions outside the home. Excursions into the community were also held, with parents invited and encouraged to take a major role.

The project teachers also helped parents to increase their use of community facilities for families.

c) *Cotterell* (1974) set out to determine the effects of the introduction of literature into the homes of Brisbane Aboriginal children aged six to ten years. During weekly or fortnightly visits, he introduced into the home picture story books and factual books and provided guidance to parents and some feedback on the children's general progress. He reported that at the conclusion of the program the children used more elaborated speech forms, made longer responses and required less prompting to communicate; did not exhibit improvement in reading ability but did show evidence of greater interest in reading and a desire to read well. The parents reported being regularly involved in reading with their children and voluntarily adopted a number of the teaching strategies advocated in the program. He found, too, evidence of considerable underlying competence and motivation in the homes.

d) Further support for the claim that family-based projects are acceptable to at least some urban Aboriginal families comes from the findings of the action/research project:

> "Extending the teaching competence of urban Aboriginal mothers".

To a description of this project, and of the families who participated in it, we now turn.

CHAPTER 5

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

SECTION I - THE PROJECT FAMILIES

Although the sample of participating families was not randomly selected, it will be seen that, at least in respect to the characteristics discussed in Chapter 2, it may be regarded as representative of many urban Aboriginal families.

Between March 1972 and December 1973 continuing contact was established with 36 Aboriginal families in Brisbane.

As the program involved regular visits to the homes and as the Parent Educators in both years of the program were well accepted by the families, an intimate understanding of the families, their sources of joy, the major stresses and strains they faced and their characteristic ways of handling these, their orientations to their children and to life itself, was gradually built up.

Many factors affect the feelings of competence and confidence with which mothers face the task of socializing their children. A detailed picture is presented below of family characteristics which would seem significant in shaping the success of the mother in her attempts to provide a satisfactory environment for her developing young children.

1. FAMILY STRUCTURE

The mother who shares the task of child-rearing with a husband or husband figure is likely to be provided with a source of financial and emotional support denied to the mother who is the sole parent in the family. Alternative sources of support may come from relatives and/or unrelated adults in the household; the extent of this support is a function of the permanence of stay of such other adults and of the interpersonal relationships that obtain.

Our project reveals a considerably higher degree of marital instability than that reported in the Smith and Biddle study, (1975). The pattern in the project families was :

Table V.1

Family Structure of Aboriginal Project Families

Father Figure Presence/Absence

Husband or de facto predominantly present	Husband or de facto predominantly absent				Total Husband or de facto Present	Absent
	Separated	Deceased	Away at sea	In jail		
22	11	1	1	1	22	14
				TOTAL = 36		

Nuclear/Extended Families

Nuclear families (M + F + children)	Mother + children only	Extended families	Total
10	2	24	36

Thus, 14 of the 36 or 39% of the mothers were bringing up their children without a permanent husband figure, though of these 14, 12 had the support of an extended family, ranging from parents (one mother and father, two fathers, three mothers) or other adult relatives (uncle, sister, brother, brother and sister-in-law) to unrelated adults (for example, single women, some with infants, sharing the household duties). The other two mothers had no supporting adults in the household.

During the period of the project, the composition of the extended families remained fairly stable in 16 of the total 24 non-nuclear families. However, in households where there was no stable husband figure, the extended family was also frequently an uncertain entity, its members sometimes there, sometimes gone, its personnel changing frequently.

The situation of spouselessness and/or impermanence imposed great strains on the mothers. Sometimes they were subjected to violence or the threat of violence as a truculent husband or de facto returned or departed. Economically their situation was as uncertain as the transient presence of a breadwinner, and those mothers who were on social service benefits as deserted wives also faced the possibility of loss of their pensions if a husband or de facto was discovered to be

currently at home. They mentioned worry about being "found out" by departmental officers. Mothers with no permanent husband figures often complained about their 'nerves", and absences from home when a teaching visit was scheduled were many times ascribed to visits to town to "see about my pension" or to court to take out an order against a deserting husband.

The effect on the children of these patterns of instability is difficult to assess. One child suffered a nervous illness which necessitated hospitalization as marital stresses occurred in the family; another child appeared to become withdrawn and anxious when her mother went to work, and the other adults in the family came and went in rapid succession. For the most part, however, the children seemed fairly undisturbed by the kaleidoscopic family scene.

Factors making for stability among the changes were the reasonably long-term presence of at least some of the adults, who were available for mothering and baby-sitting, and a permanent army of siblings.

2. SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD

Our sample of Brisbane Aboriginals was characterized by large families and by overcrowding (i.e. large numbers of people per unit area). Many of the families were large, not only because of the number of adults in them (66% were extended families) but also because of the number of children. While two of the largest families (one with fourteen children and five adults, one with eight children and five adults) moved during the course of the project into large rambling houses, so that pressure per unit area was somewhat relieved, it remained true that other almost equally large families (for example, ten children and two adults, eight children and four adults) lived in houses with three or fewer bedrooms. Pressure per unit area was therefore great; bedrooms accommodated several people, and verandahs also served as sleeping quarters.

The family units in the sample had a mean number of 5.2 children; distribution of family unit size was as shown in Table V.2

During the period of the project, the mean effective number of children under the care of the mothers was 5.3, due to the fact that in six of the families some of the older children were not living at home, while in six other families the mother was now also caring for a grandchild (or grandchildren), nephew or niece.

In fifteen of these households there were five or more children under 13 years. Households characterized by the presence of relatively large numbers of very young children were not infrequent. For example, see Table V.3.

Table V.2

Number of Children per Household in 36 Project Families

No.of children	Family frequency	No. of children	Family frequency
1	2	6	5
2	4	7	3
3	3	8	5
4	6	9	1
5	5	12	2

Table V.3

Project Households with Large Numbers of Young Children

Age range in years	Number of children in household	Age range in years	Number of children in household
1-4	4	1-6	5
1-5	4	1-7	6
1-5	5	1-7	7
1-6	4	2-7	5
1-6	4		

The very high accommodation pressure in the homes is shown in Table V.4, with the average number of persons per household being 8.61. Eleven, or nearly one-third of the households, contained ten or more adults and children. The number of adults shown is necessarily approximate; as has already been pointed out, numbers in many of the extended families fluctuated and would often have been greater than those cited, seldom fewer.

What was the effect on the mothers of these larger-than-average families? Stresses appeared to vary according to the pattern of the family:

Table V.4

Number of Persons per Household in 36 Project Families

No.of persons	Total adults	Children of adults other than project mother	Children under project mother's care	No.of persons	Total adults	Children of adults other than project mother	Children under project mother's care
18	3	-	15	8	2	-	6
17	3	1	13	8	4	-	4
13	5	1	7	8	4	2	4
13	6	-	7	8	4	2	2
12	4	-	8	8	4	-	2
12	4	-	8	7	1	-	6
12	2	-	10	7	3	-	4
11	6	-	5	7	3	-	4
10	2	-	8	6	1	-	5
10	3	-	7	6	1	-	5
10	3	2	5	6	2	-	4
9	3	-	6	6	3	-	3
9	4	1	4	6	4	-	2
9	2	6	1	5	2	-	3
8	2	-	6	5	2	-	3
8	2	-	6	5	2	-	3
8	2	-	6	4	2	-	2
8	2	-	6	3	2	-	1

Total Adults in 36 Households : 104 $\bar{x}$ = 2.89

Total Children in 36 Households : 206 $\bar{x}$ = 5.72

Total People in 36 Households : 310 $\bar{x}$ = 8.61

a) There were unremitting pressures on some mothers, particularly in the nuclear families and in those fluctuating extended families with neither stable husband figure nor permanent family members. These were the mothers who had to bear, predominantly alone, the responsibility for a large number of children, all young and closely spaced. A mother whose five children ranged between two and seven years, or one and five years, was in many ways more stressed than was a mother of twelve children aged four to eighteen years. The former were the mothers who reported "bad nerves", whose babies needed constant feeding and bottling, who worried about getting the nappies dry, about their children fighting, teasing, telling tales, playing with matches or the hose, making a mess, dawdling, straying on the road, playing late on the way home from school.

b) There were rather different pressures on the mothers whose families were more widely spaced. In one way these mothers were at an advantage; in a family of eight ranging from three to 23 years or one of twelve ranging from four to eighteen years, the older children tended to become substitute mother figures, helping considerably with the younger children. On the other hand, with these older children, mothers referred to problems of a different kind. Adolescence allied with schooling difficulties frequently had negative behavioural effects, and some mothers reported increasing rebelliousness which they felt powerless to deal with. Where older adolescents and young adult members of the family became involved with the courts, the mother invariably took on the time and energy consuming burden of attending hearings, trying to give support by her physical presence for perhaps days of court proceedings. Sometimes the younger children accompanied the mother, sometimes they were left at home with another member of the family. Either way, stresses on the whole family were great.

It has been pointed out that 66% of the families were extended families. The presence of a large adult group also had varying effects on the mothers. In some cases, as has been suggested, the other adults were a source of great support, both emotionally and in more tangible ways. They helped with cleaning, cooking and the never-ending washing and ironing, they minded children, freeing the mother for shopping trips or for casual employment; if they were working, they contributed to the family income.

For some mothers, however, extended families meant extended problems. Mothers sometimes complained about young male relatives, who they said had moved in, often without a job, expecting the family to support them. There seemed to be a decreasing tendency among the mothers to comply with these demands. Some reported "putting their foot down", issuing ultimata: "Get a job by next Monday or get out." The traditional code of looking after relatives indefinitely seemed to be changing.

There were also some evident tensions between the generations. Some grandmothers reported grandchildren getting on their nerves, and mothers complained of *their* mothers "picking on" certain children, and "being too soft" on others.

Disagreements among the members of some of the extended families were frequent, and sometimes resulted in some members moving out; this was one of the commonest reasons for the fluctuations in membership already mentioned.

Another source of strain for some of the mothers occurred when other members of the extended family moved in to a Housing Commission home. These houses are rented strictly on a specified occupancy, and the mothers - as in the case of the pension-receiving mother whose de facto had returned - lived in fear of the authorities finding out about their situation.

How do the mothers and children in these predominantly large, overcrowded families interact?

In all the families it would be true that there was an intense atmosphere of physical interaction - hugging and hitting were both constant occurrences. A grandmother might sit in the corner comforting two or three crawling babies who had hurt themselves,while the mother might chastise the older children and then dismiss them. In these families verbal interaction appeared to follow a fairly uncomplicated pattern: scoldings and commands by the mothers, begging requests or grizzles from the children.

In other families, relatively few in number, verbal communication was more complex; reasons were given for requests by the mothers, and conversations were exchanged about the events of the day.

The families in which the former pattern operated tended to be those in which the children were young and closely spaced, and the mother's emotional energy

consequently more drained. Increasingly in the future this pressure may be alleviated as awareness grows among the mothers of the possibilities of family limitation. Mothers who raised this issue in conversation were quite definite that they did not want more children. A number had sought advice from a recently-established government-subsidised Family Planning Clinic. Others had taken advantage of sterilization opportunities at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, though they reported many difficulties being placed in the way of their having this operation performed. A 26 year old mother with eight children reported being repeatedly refused on the grounds that she was *too young*. Finally she succeeded in having the operation.

Even in the largest and most overcrowded of the families, actual opportunities for verbal interaction were not absent. Some mothers, aware of the stress being laid in our project on talking to their children, demurred that they had no time; they might make this claim as they sat in front of the television set watching the midday movie, or as they pegged the clothes out with their children playing about their feet - the perfect situation for incidental talk about colours, numbers, matching sets.

It was not time or opportunity that these mothers lacked, but emotional energy, as well as the realization that talking to their children is important. Where this concept had been internalized, as it was for some of the mothers, the emotional energy was miraculously found even in very large, overcrowded families. One mother, for instance laughed as she recalled her six year old daughter knocking over a glass of milk at the table:

> "I was just going to give her a clip over the ear when I thought, now I'm in the project I've got to explain why she should have been watching what she was doing!"

3. HOUSING

All the families live in rented houses. These ranged from small, rickety weatherboard structures with missing floorboards and broken windows, to old but sound large wooden houses, to trim stucco or timber Housing Commission bungalows. Many more houses were old and shabby than trim and new.

Where families moved from houses in poor repair to newer ones, mothers often appeared to find the incentive to spend time and care furnishing with new curtains and linos. Many of the houses, though dilapidated outside, were lovingly arranged inside with knick-knacks, pictures and family photographs.

4. MOBILITY

Mobility was a major disrupting factor, both to the families who moved and to the project. Two-thirds of the mothers moved at least once during the course of their participation in the project.

Table V.5

Family Mobility

	Number of Moves				
	0	1	2	3 or > 3	Totals
Home Teaching Group	4	6	4	3	17
Library Group	8	8	2	1	19
Totals	12	14	6	4	36

Four of the moves were from Brisbane to country towns; two of these families subsequently returned to Brisbane.

Reasons for these moves were mainly inability to meet rent payments, and the resumption of houses by landlords, sometimes for renovation and rent increase. Sometimes the reason was family disagreement and break up. In the main, families moved to better, often much better, homes. The moves were almost always away from the inner city areas where our project began,to structurally sounder and bigger houses with pleasant gardens further out in suburbs where rents were much lower.

On the whole, the mothers who moved were pleased with their new situation. But the period prior to the move was usually one of great strain and anxiety, since alternative housing had been extremely difficult to find. Some mothers reported prejudice from prospective landlords and agents. Often a large bond had been demanded which they were unable to pay. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Housing Commission were sometimes able to help, but waiting lists were long. Often the families had been obliged to go further from their relatives than they would have wished, though the areas to which they moved usually had other branches of the family in the vicinity.

The children's schooling nearly always suffered on these occasions. Not only had they to adjust to new teachers and classmates, but often they stayed at

home for a considerable time before a route to the new school was ascertained and enrolment effected.

For the project, the high rate of mobility among families in the sample posed major difficulties. Absences from scheduled teaching and library visits and from mothers' meetings occurred when mothers were house-hunting, packing and moving; the project assumed an understandably low priority in the face of such anxieties and uncertainties. When a new house was found, the location was sometimes extremely difficult to fit into the Parent Educator's program, and above all, resettling into a new environment often appeared to disrupt the mother's feeling of continuity and wish for involvement with the project. Some dropped out following a move, and others moved too far to be reached.

5. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

Thirty-three of the 36 mothers provided information about their own educational attainments, and 23 gave information about their husbands. Some of this latter information seemed based on guesswork rather than actual knowledge.

Table V.6

Educational Level of Project Parents

Grade level achieved	Number of mothers	Number of fathers
nil	1	-
2	1	-
3	0	-
4	2	1
5	3	1
6	10	4
7	3	4
8	6	8
9	2	1
10	5	3
12	-	1
Totals	33	23
Average grade level reached	6.8	7.6

This picture of low educational level achieved appears to have had its expected occupational consequences.

Of the mothers, one was permanently employed as a clerk in a government department. Many of the other mothers took jobs for a few days or weeks in establishments which offered unskilled work such as the Cannery or Cold Stores, or they undertook cleaning or domestic work. They were able to go into such jobs on a short-term, no-notice basis, but, equally were often put off with as little notice. The mothers took these jobs to boost a tightly-stretched family budget or to meet some particular payment or - for those mothers who received social service benefits - to allow them to live until pension day arrived. The employment of three mothers during 1973 as skilled Parent Educators, working four mornings a week for 40 weeks, was a notable exception to the pattern of spasmodic unskilled work that most of the other mothers knew. Where father figures were present in the families, only two (a minister of religion and a salesman) had white-collar jobs. Other occupations were those of labourer, truck driver, seaman, waterside-worker, railwayman, brewery worker, blind institute cane worker.

Several of the father figures experienced considerable periods of unemployment during the course of our project. One father was in jail for most of the period, and a number of other families had members, apart from the father figure, convicted in the courts. Charges included car theft, robbery, assault and drunken driving. It can be postulated that at least some of this court involvement was a function of inadequate education, poorly paid and menial jobs - or lack of employment - and the resulting economic and personal frustrations.

Without exception, all the mothers in our project stated the belief that it is important to get a good education and that they wished their children to have better jobs than their parents. Very many of the mothers, however, did not relate their stated aspiration either to the necessity for their own parental interest and involvement (an insight central to our project) or to the necessity for the children to attend school regularly.

In many of the families able-bodied school-age children were frequently at home on school days. A number of reasons for this were expressed or implied by the mothers:

a) The child was not liking school and did not want to go. Many Aboriginal mothers tended to lack confidence about consulting teachers when children had difficulties at school.

b) There was no money in the house for the child to buy lunch at the tuck-shop. There might also not be enough food in the house to cut a lunch for the child to take to school.

c) Mother was going shopping in town and took the child too.

Despite the mothers' stated aspirations for their children, some showed through their actual behaviour that they ascribed fairly low priority to education.

In some of the families, however, education and the long-term commitment to it had a much higher priority. Changing attitudes, and the contrast between them, were exemplified in one family in which an older daughter rebuked her mother who had allowed a younger child to stay home:

> "You *say* you want her to do well but what you *mean* is, 'I didn't get much school so why should she?' Do you want her to grow up dumb?"

The older daughter won. The child went to school.

6. HEALTH

Illness, both of adults and children, was a recurring stress for most of the families in the project. On many occasions teaching visits or mothers' meetings were missed because a child had to be taken to hospital, or because the mother was ill herself. A significant proportion of absences from mothers' meetings over the period were attributed to illness.

While the nine mothers who had babies during their association with the project would hardly class their hospitalization as due to illness, their absences were sometimes lengthened by such complications as anaemia, high blood pressure and diabetes. Other causes of mothers' hospitalization were heart ailments, bronchitis, appendicitis, nephritis. Two fathers spent prolonged periods on compensation with slipped discs.

Children in the families also spent periods in hospital or missed school

with complaints such as: ear infections, measles, chicken pox, pneumonia, bronchitis, influenza, colds, asthma, head sores, tonsillitis, gastro-enteritis, urinary infections, whooping cough, croup, rashes, infected teeth and gums.

Dietary deficiencies may have played a part in recurrent patterns of infections such as colds in families where such low-grade foods as potato chips, slices of bread and soft drinks appeared to be the staple hunger-appeasing items.

The most vulnerable members of the families were undoubtedly the youngest. Their commonest complaints were colds, chest infections, ear troubles, gastro-enteritis, measles and high temperatures of unknown etiology.

The mothers availed themselves readily of the free hospital services, without which it often seemed that the numbers of children participating in the project would have been decimated. At the same time the very availability of these services meant long queues and hours spent waiting for attention, often with several children in tow, and difficult trips by foot or bus to and from the few centralized public hospitals. The setting up of an Aboriginal Medical Centre in an inner city area close to where one group of mothers lived was welcomed with relief by those mothers who no longer had to spend so long waiting for attention.

Although scarcely statistically significant, it may be worthy of mention that the three Aboriginal Parent Educators, two of whom suffered a good deal of serious illness in the first year of the project (that is, before their appointment) were singularly free of sickness since their appointment, and reported that they had never felt better since they started working so hard.

7. ATTITUDES TO SELF AND COMMUNITY

On the whole the energies of the mothers in our project appeared to be directed far more towards coping with the day-to-day cares of family living than towards issues and causes.

Exceptions would be one mother who spasmodically directed a playgroup for Aboriginal children, and who was sympathetic to the Black Power movement, then receiving much publicity, and another mother who with her husband was on a

committee of an Aboriginal sporting club.

Most of the mothers appeared to be either apathetic or sceptical about political activity. During the 1972 General Election some mothers expressed total ignorance of parties and candidates, saying that they had never voted in the past and would not do so now. More positive was the request of one mother for assistance in completing a failure-to-enrol form: this mother, who had six children aged one to six years, gave "I forgot" as her quite truthful reason. She knew that returning the form would lead to a fine, as it did, but said she preferred to pay the fine although as an Aboriginal she was not obliged to enrol at all. Even though she wished to figure as a citizen, this mother still said she "could not care less" about the political situation.

With a very few exceptions, the mothers appeared to be indifferent to or suspicious of moves towards black militancy. One mother, however, played an active part in a militant church guild, and had become involved in one of its projects, the staging of a program of traditional songs and dances. This mother seemed to be unique among the 36 mothers in having both a knowledge of traditional culture and the desire actively to promulgate it. Other mothers who brought up the subject, while claiming a smattering of a few aspects of Aboriginal culture, said they lacked an overall picture, and while they expressed a nostalgic regret about this, it did not appear a matter of deep concern to them.

Indeed, expressed attitudes to their Aboriginal heritage seemed deeply ambivalent. A few houses had boomerangs and other artefacts displayed as decorations, and a few mothers talked with pleasure and admiration of the old ways of cooking goanna and making baskets, which they remembered from girlhood or had heard of from their parents. These mothers expressed regret that their children were not interested in these stories; some of the children, they said, refused to recognize that they were in fact Aboriginal.

Many mothers expressed the conviction that they had been discriminated against. They spoke of the fact that they were also part-Irish, German, English etc. - "But it's always the Aboriginal part that gets noticed." They mentioned slights from schoolfellows and later from people they worked with or for, and from passers-by in the street - "cutting remarks" which they had developed strategies to cope with. "You make a cutting remark back, or you just ignore it.

That hurts them more."

A number of mothers expressed the wish that their children would be able to grow up free from the feeling that they themselves had of being "second class people." One mother reported all her life standing back and taking second place because of being an Aboriginal. In almost the same breath this mother reinforced her own negative stereotype of Aboriginality by referring to her husband, from whom she had separated, as "having too much of the Aboriginal in him - he wouldn't take any responsibility."

Another mother expressed scepticism about our project on the grounds that it asked mothers to take too much responsibility for themselves: "You'll never get a group of blacks to do anything for themselves without somebody standing over them." It is to be hoped that not the least value of our project was the opportunity it may have given to this mother and the other mothers to discover how much more competent and responsible they are than they thought they were. Certainly the three Parent Educators experienced such a growth in self-confidence.

The social life of the families seemed to be very much a matter of visiting between relations, and there was a web of relationships between branches in various parts of Brisbane. At the same time, interaction seemed to occur on a friendly enough basis between many of the families and their white neighbours - the children often played with each other and some of the mothers came to their neighbours' rescue with the minding of sick children. During the period of the project there were no reports from the mothers of active ill-will between themselves and the community around them.

SUMMARY

Hanging over many of the mothers in the project was a threatening array of debilitating forces that impinged on them, pushing them in directions over which they felt little control. Such forces were: marital instability, large and demanding families; uncertain, often poor housing; a low income; frequent dependence on pension cheques; subjection to bureaucratic authority; court involvement of relatives and children; menial and transient job opportunities; limitation of horizons through lack of qualifications; frequent illness; a consciousness of discrimination.

The picture, however, was by no means totally gloomy.

Not one of the mothers in the project had so little sense of self-worth that she consistently neglected her house and children; these mothers set considerable store by house-cleaning, washing, buying becoming clothes for themselves and the children, dressing attractively when they were out. They had high aspirations for their children's futures, though they might not yet have learned the means necessary to help implement those aspirations. They had the considerable support, as well as the nuisance, of the extended family, and they were showing an increasing desire to limit their own families to the proportions they wanted. There appeared to be some interest both in Aboriginal culture and in outside affairs, and this interest can be expected to grow as government and community awareness makes job opportunities and qualifying courses increasingly available. If a project such as ours can enable some Aboriginal mothers to recognize their immense importance as teachers of their own children, it can fit meaningfully into this pattern of growing responsibility of Aboriginal people for their own affairs.

SECTION II - THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1. OBJECTIVES

The approach in the two-year research project described below was based on:

- respect for the parent and a desire to enhance rather than lower her prestige in the eyes of her children;
- recognition of the fact that parents are the prime teachers of their children, and that, although they often have high aspirations for their children, they sometimes lack the knowledge of how to help their children develop the skills and characteristics which will lead to higher levels of academic achievement;
- recognition of the parents as partners with others in the education of their children.

In the *first year*, the project aimed -

a) to ascertain the child-rearing goals and teaching behaviours of urban Aboriginal mothers and the levels of cognitive and linguistic functioning of their Grade I and pre-school aged children;

b) to design and implement two types of intervention program which would focus on the mother and her Grade I child;

c) to determine the effects of these programs on the mothers and children.

In the *second year*, the project aimed -

a) to train and employ Aboriginal mothers as Parent Educators;

b) to assess the effectiveness of the Aboriginal Parent Educators;

c) to determine the effects of programs implemented by white and Aboriginal Parent Educators, working with mothers and their pre-school aged children.

2. THE RESEARCH TEAM

Manning the Project were the Project Director, and a full-time Senior Parent Educator, a trained teacher. In the second year, three of the participating parents joined the team, working four mornings per week.

3. SELECTION OF SAMPLE

An earlier Brisbane study (Biddle, 1969) had established that while Aboriginal households are located in almost all areas of the city, they tend to be concentrated in four areas: two older central city areas and two outer suburbs.

It had been planned to draw the two samples (Intervention Programs I and II) from two suburbs distant from each other in order to minimize the horizontal diffusion effect, whereby families in Program II would learn of and might be likely to implement the teaching strategies to which families in Program I were exposed. In the event, a number of factors limited this control of diffusion effects: the impossibility of selecting the sample for Program II from the one area, the high mobility rate of the families, and the extensive network of friendship and kinship among Aboriginal people across widely separated suburbs.

It had also originally been intended to select two groups, each of ten mothers, who would remain with the project for two years. Thus each family should contain one child entering Grade I in 1972 and a three year old sibling. In the first year of the program the presence of this three year old would allow us to check whether intensive work with the mothers would lead to changes in their interactions with all children in the family. If there were such changes, as were indicated by Gray and Klaus (1968), and Hunt (1971), we might expect improved cognitive functioning in these younger siblings even though specific attention had not been paid to the interactions of the mothers with these younger children. It was planned that in the second year of the program,

these younger children, by then four years of age, would be the target children for planned mother-child interactions.

Again, this plan could not be implemented because of the scarcity of families in the areas containing a Grade I entrant and a three year old child. Furthermore, the withdrawal of a number of mothers from the project made it necessary for us to recruit a substantial number of new families in both years of the project.

In total, only six pre-school children remained in the program for the two years, three in Program I and three in Program II.

An initial approach was made to the Aboriginal Director of a recreational club run for and by Aboriginals, and the objectives of the project outlined to her. Impressed with its possible value to the mothers and children, she suggested obtaining the names and addresses of Aboriginal Grade I children in a number of Brisbane city state schools. She then accompanied the Project Director to the homes of all the mothers in the area with the greatest number of listed children, introducing her to the mothers, and helping to explain the project. As a result of these approaches, ten mothers readily joined Program I. This sample lived in an inner urban area.

The second group (Program II) was formed after much difficulty. An Aboriginal woman in a different suburb agreed to act as contact with Aboriginal families, but her absences from Brisbane delayed initial approaches for some time. When she was available, contact was made with the six schools in the area but it was found impossible to obtain a sample of families which included a three year old child. Finally, schools in yet another area of Brisbane were approached, and ten families with Grade I children were located, though in only seven of these were there three year old siblings. It was decided, in view of the passage of time, to try to recruit these ten families, and the Aboriginal Club Director assisted the Senior Parent Educator to do this in the same invaluable way as before. Program II was set up with ten participating mothers. These families lived in a number of outer Brisbane suburbs.

In the second year, only three of the original families of Programs I and II remained in the project. In finding replacement families, the three Aboriginal Parent Educators assisted the Senior Parent Educator in calling on

potential recruits and explaining the purposes of the project, and on some occasions initiated the recruitment of new mothers.

Because of the marked difficulties in securing a sample for Intervention Program II and because of the time-consuming nature of the initial assessment of mothers and children, no attempt could be made to match the families of the two samples on any characteristics. The only difference between the two samples, at point of selection, was geographic location; as will be shown later, even this distinction became blurred as participating families changed residence. Subsequent analyses show that there were differences between the two samples, particularly in stability of family unit; our inability to match the two samples therefore rendered assessment of the differential effects of the two programs difficult.

No control group families were included in either year of the project. While this absence of a control group imposes limitations on the interpretation of the results, the decision not to use a control group was made on practical and philosophical grounds. During recent years in Australia, Aboriginal peoples have begun to object to the ever-increasing amount of research being conducted on them, and many are, in our view, rightly seeking from researchers an assurance of Aboriginal benefit from the research before agreeing to participate. In this research program, we were able to explain with honesty to mothers in both intervention programs the possibility of benefit and enjoyment to both them and their children. No such assurance could have been given a control group of families.

Furthermore, the total assessment time asked of families was approximately four to five hours, the assessment being conducted, in the main, within the homes of the families. It was decided that request for collaboration in this amount of assessment, within the home, would be both unwarrantable and an undesirable invasion of privacy, when it could not be accompanied by any help or offer of benefit to the families concerned. Although the decision to omit a control group weakened the research design, we felt (and continue to feel) that it was the appropriate decision to make.

However, since the only assessment demands on the four year old children in the second year resulted from the administration of the Stanford-Binet, it

was decided in that year to include a contr l group of ten four year old Aboriginal children attending kindergarten. All four children attending a city kindergarten and six attending a kindergarten in an outer suburb were, with the permission of the mothers and the kindergarten directors, assessed at the kindergarten at the beginning of Year 2. At the end of that year, however, only five of these children were available for retesting; the four from the city kindergarten had either moved from Brisbane or had, after changing residence in Brisbane, left the kindergarten and could not be traced.

A completely open approach was made to the mothers, who joined the project voluntarily and were free to withdraw at any time. It was explained that the project had been set up because it was felt that in many ways mothers were more important than teachers in determining children's progress at school, and that much was now known about ways in which mothers at home can help their children learn. The mothers were asked if they would like to be in a project to try out some of these ways with their children. The objects of the Home Teaching visits (for Program I), Library visits and Mothers' Meetings were explained, and also the purposes of the pre and post-program tests.

Probably the most difficult and frustrating facet of the project was the attempt - and failure - to maintain the samples.

In the first year, five families, with whom the pre-program tests had been carried out, withdrew from Program I, and four from Program II, mostly after four to eight weeks. It was not possible to replace all these families, and the effective numbers who completed the first year program were sixteen - nine in Program I and seven in Program II.

In the second year, six families from Program I had to be replaced at the beginning of the year and an additional family recruited. Of the replacement families, two subsequently withdrew. In Program II, four families had to be replaced at the beginning of the year and three additional families found. Of these seven replacement families, five withdrew. After three further replacements had been secured, four of those who had withdrawn expressed a desire to return to the project. Thus, final sample sizes in the second year were eight in Program I and twelve in Program II.

4. THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The basic objective of the intervention programs was to help the mothers create in the home an environment favourable to their children's development, particularly in school-relevant characteristics, by extending the teaching competence of the mothers. The focus of the Parent Educators' activities was the mother/child dyad (or, as was the case so frequently, mother/children).

The framework which guided the selection of activities for mother/child interaction was drawn from Hess (1969). Hess, concerned with the family as a socializer of cognitive behaviour, examined the available empirical research on the effects of parental behaviour and values upon cognitive development and school achievement in young children. He found that school achievement is significantly related to a number of family characteristics: demand for high achievement, maximization of verbal interaction, engagement with attentiveness to the child, maternal teaching behaviour, diffuse intellectual stimulation, warm affective relationship with the child, feelings of high regard for child and self, pressure for independence and self-reliance, quality and severity of disciplinary rules, and use of conceptual rather than arbitrary regulatory strategies.

The intervention programs were concerned with all of Hess's variables except for those relating to pressure for independence and disciplinary rules, on which no direct stress was laid.

Intervention Program I (Home Teaching Program)

This program had three major components:

(i) A visit to each home once a fortnight by the Senior Parent Educator. During this visit, the Senior Parent Educator introduced to the five year old, in the mother's presence, certain developmental games, toys and books and taught the child to use these. The aim was to show the mother how to encourage the child's development through the use of these materials and particularly through increased mother-child verbal interaction. The mother and child were encouraged to work on these together; the resource materials were available for borrowing for use in the home until the next visit.

She also worked with the child, in the mother's presence, on school-related skills; she explained to the mother the goals, program and methods of

the school. As well, she helped the mother to become aware of community facilities, such as children's libraries.

(ii) A meeting of all mothers involved in the experimental program, once a fortnight. The aim of this meeting was group discussion and sharing of experiences,and reactions (by mothers and children) to the Senior Parent Educator's activities. Teachers from the schools were invited at times to these meetings, in order to increase parent-teacher contact and understanding.

(iii) Organized visits to the children's schools, and one visit to a local library.

Intervention Program II (Library Program)

A modified intervention program was instituted with a further group of mothers, from a different district in Brisbane.

The developmental games, toys and books were available for borrowing for use in the home for extended periods of time, as in Intervention Program I, but the Senior Parent Educator did not conduct teaching sessions in the home for mother and child.

As in Intervention Program I, a meeting of the mothers was held once a fortnight. The aims and conduct of these meetings were the same in both intervention programs.

Essential Difference between the Two Intervention Programs

Both programs aimed to increase the amount and quality of home stimulation available to the child, and both aimed to increase the mother's understanding and knowledge of the school program. Both of these objectives, if attained, should have fostered the children's school achievement.

Intervention Program I was designed to ascertain whether the additional component of working individually with the mothers to further their competence in the teaching role would be reflected in greater gains by these children in their school progress.

A. HOME TEACHING VISITS

(i) Year 1

The purpose of the Parent Educator's fortnightly teaching visit was to work with the mothers in their own homes, discussing with them the objectives and program of the school, showing them how to help their children with their school work and how to foster the general cognitive development of their children, helping them to realize that they have a vital role to play in the educational development of their children, and helping them, also, to become more effective teachers of their children.

In order to achieve this purpose, the Senior Parent Educator spent approximately one morning per fortnight in the Grade I classrooms of the children in the project, so as to keep abreast both of their individual stages of development and of the school program in general.

Keeping these two factors in mind, it was the Parent Educator's task to devise a series of fortnightly activities for home demonstration with the mother and child which might serve as springboards for the mothers's own creative action.

Three principal readymade aids were used: a tape recorder, a set of Cuisinaire rods (a box of which was given to each family for home use) and the Peabody Language Development Kits and Manual for Level 1(Dunn, 1965) a fertile source both of stimulating material and teaching ideas. As well, everyday materials such as cardboard, tiles, cheap plastic animals, cups, saucers, real fruit, buttons, counters, scraps of material were pressed into service for a variety of purposes.

Each teaching visit lasted approximately an hour and a quarter: about 40 to 50 minutes spent on the teaching activities (long enough for a 5 to 6 year old after a day at school, and also for a mother with other children and dinner preparations claiming her attention); a quarter of an hour changing library books and toys; and perhaps ten minutes of relaxed chat.

Major fields covered in the teaching activities were basic number

*See appendix for a description of typical Home Teaching visits.

skills and concepts, and the development of talking and listening.

Mathematical concepts included: one to one correspondence, conservation, seriation, counting, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, sets, estimation of weight and length, discrimination of common shapes.

Reading and Writing Skills and Concepts encompassed: pattern making and matching; associating sounds and symbols; matching objects or pictures and their initial sounds; observing the position of letters in words; identifying and matching whole words; developing small muscle co-ordination and object manipulation.

Language Development was fostered by getting the child and mother to experience and talk about such activities as: classifying, pantomiming, following directions, identifying and naming pictures, objects and actions, listening to and reproducing sounds and rhythms, feeling and smelling unusual objects, discriminating between and describing colours, observing and remembering missing objects, playing shop, story telling.

Each activity encompassed many skills and concepts. For example, in "The Outline Game" where the child takes objects out of a box, names them and tries to place each object on its outline drawn on a piece of cardboard, skills developed can include: labelling, describing and vocabulary building, one to one correspondence, observing and describing shapes, making selections, matching; observing similarities and differences, counting. If the mother then encourages the child to make his *own* "Outline Game" the small muscles used in writing will be developed.

For each of the 40 minute sessions, three or four activities were planned. As the year proceeded, the activities increased in complexity, broadly related as they were to the school program, but in every case an activity was capable of being extended or simplified, as seemed appropriate to the individual child's readiness.

(ii) Year 2

In the second year, three of the participating mothers from Year I became part-time Parent Educators, joining the Senior Parent Educator for Home

Teaching visits, which were conducted weekly in each home.

In this second year, the focus in suggesting ways in which mothers can help children learn shifted from Grade I children to pre-school aged children. Activities were therefore geared to this level and here the manual *Workjobs* (Barratta, 1972) and the *Peabody Language Development Kit* (Dunn, 1965) were found invaluable, though some of their suggestions were aimed at older children and were adapted by the Parent Educators at their weekly planning sessions.

The format of the teaching visits was the same as had proved workable in the first year: three or four activities, involving both mother and child, usually concluding with the reading of a story or part of a story. Major fields covered in the teaching activities were also the same as in Year 1, but at a simpler level:

Mathematical concepts included: one to one correspondence; simple estimations of weight and length; counting up to 5; discrimination of common shapes; identification of likenesses and differences.

Pre-reading and writing skills and concepts included: pattern making and matching; sorting and matching objects and pictures; developing small muscle co-ordination and object manipulation.

Language development was fostered in much the same ways as in the previous year. Some emphasis was given to concepts such as 'inside','outside', etc., and the names of colours which most children did not know.

B. LIBRARY VISITS

The aims of the home Library program remained constant in both Year 1 and Year 2.

These aims were to introduce to the mother and child at home certain developmental games, toys and books, to teach them how these could be used, and to suggest to the mother how, by playing and working together with the child, using these materials, and particularly by increased verbal interaction, she could enhance the child's development. The resource materials were kept

in the homes until the next visit by the Parent Educator, when they were exchanged for other items in the Library.

(i) Year 1

As with the Home Teaching program, the Senior Parent Educator visited homes once a fortnight, when the five year old child was home from school. Library visits lasted a comparatively short time, some half hour or so, encompassing the choosing, by mother and child, of new resource materials from the Library, the demonstration and discussion of these materials, and the return of the previous borrowings. Often, as in the Home Teaching Program, a cup of tea and a chat formed part of these visits.

(ii) Year 2

The main differences between the Library programs in the two years were, as with the Home Teaching program, that in Year 2:

- three Aboriginal Parent Educators joined the Senior Parent Educator in the teaching team;
- the program concentrated on helping the mothers prepare their 4 year olds for school learning, instead of suggesting ways of their working with 5 year olds as in Year 1. Library materials were therefore appropriate to the younger age group;
- because of the increased personnel, Library home visits became weekly instead of fortnightly.

The Library allotment of $300 (spread over all the families) was husbanded so that sums were available to boost the Library when necessary through stock losses or deterioration. This quite small amount of money allowed a high level of maintenance and variety in the Library over the year-long period. In Year 2, much of the material from the first year was still in good condition and, where appropriate to the younger age level, was able to be used.

A number of criteria were initially used in making Library purchases:

1. *Relative inexpensiveness.* It was hoped that if mothers became convinced of the value of such materials they might be more encouraged to buy similar stimulus materials for their families if the items were cheaper rather than dearer. Also for the purposes of the project it was of course more practicable to replace cheaper library materials. Where an expensive wooden jigsaw puzzle piece or domino is as likely to be lost as a cheaper cardboard or plastic one, it makes budgeting sense to buy cardboard or plastic. Exceptions to this were some materials or books which appeared to have special educative value and which were not available in cheaper forms: for example, some fairly expensive books dealing with key learning concepts in a particularly appealing way; these augmented the much larger number of cheap and reasonably good books.

2. *The potential for mother-child verbal interaction.* If a choice had to be made between say "Snakes and Ladders"(which requires two players and should promote talk between mother and child about numbers, directions such as left, right, up and down, and colours of squares and markers) and Building Blocks (which can be left entirely to the child alone), "Snakes and Ladders" would be chosen. In practice, this procedure was not strictly adhered to as time went on. Mothers and children persistently asked for building blocks and jigsaw puzzles (which had not originally been included on the above grounds). In complying, the Parent Educator then tried to build on their expressed interest by suggesting ways in which mothers could talk with their children about heights, colours, and real or fantasy purposes of the objects made from the building blocks, and encourage the children to tell them stories about the creatures in the jigsaw puzzles. Conversely, materials with a high potential for arousing verbal interaction (like card and dice games) *need not* be so used but could be left by an uninterested mother to the child's solo playing. As time went on, therefore, it seemed best to the Parent Educator to point out possibilities as persuasively as possible and then leave to the mother the decision about her participation in the child's use of a wide variety of materials, even some which would not on the face of it appear conducive to adult-child interaction.

3. *"Recyclability".* Materials such as paints, clay, books with tear-out or stick-on components had to be regretfully rejected for inclusion in the Library since all materials had to be used many times over.

4. *Ease of care.* A criterion besought by many mothers but almost impossible to meet was that of "no little pieces". The nature of small children's learning makes it often essential to have numbers of little pieces to be matched, moved and manipulated, and it was possible to meet the mothers' pleas only within a very small range: magnifying glasses, magnets, glove puppets, dolls, skipping ropes, and of course, books.

C. MOTHERS' MEETINGS

The purposes of the Mothers' Meetings were threefold:

i) to enable the mothers to raise, either in the group or with the Project Director, any issues relating to their children or the program;

ii) to enable the Project Director to put forward directly some teaching ideas, such as the value of regular reading by parents to children;

iii) to introduce or reinforce new teaching ideas through other activities or media, such as film.

Apart from these educational aims, and perhaps reinforcing them, was the simple enjoyment of a carefree morning - and morning tea - out together: carefree because mothers were able, if they wished, to bring their children yet be relieved of baby-minding responsibilities by the presence of a number of volunteer student baby-sitters. For some of the mothers this was undoubtedly the chief draw of the meetings - they said so.

Meetings were fortnightly - the Home Teaching families (Program I) meeting one week, the Library families (Program II) the other, in order to try to separate the effects of the two programs. Transport was provided by a University bus whose driver became an avuncular part of the project. Much thought was given to the location for the meetings. The University was at first rejected as a possible venue on the grounds of its alien atmosphere. For some months, meetings were held in the city club, run for and by Aborigines, whose Director had given such help in the recruitment of the groups. When this club was demolished, however, the meetings did move to the University, which proved, despite earlier misgivings, highly acceptable to the mothers.

Activities at the meetings included puppet-making; a number of films on basic teaching concepts; a visit to a local municipal library; and talks to the mothers by two of the teachers of some of the children. Of all these activities, probably the teachers' visits were enjoyed most, the films least, ("boring" was a later feedback) though these meetings may have been redeemed in the mothers' eyes by a cartoon finale which was always shown for the children and was universally enjoyed.

The general format of the meetings changed in the second year. Where films had previously been the staple fare, in the second year at most sessions an example of play and teaching materials was discussed and made by the mothers to take home and use with their children. Such materials included sock and finger puppets; picture lotto; picture bingo; picture sequencing game; card-matching games of various kinds; flannelboard; 'Who Am I?' animal guessing book; scrapbook; jigsaw puzzles. Teaching principles involved in all these activities were at first explained (with some of the children helping as demonstrators) by the Project Director or the Senior Parent Educator, but increasingly by the Parent Educators whose confidence and competence in group work increased notably as the year went on.

The Parent Educators and Senior Parent Educator often planned their home teaching activities to mesh in with the Mothers' Meetings, so that materials made by the Home Teaching group (Program I) were used by the Parent Educators in the subsequent week's teaching visit, and then left in the mothers' homes. The Library group (Program II) on the other hand, took their play materials home at once from the meetings.

One film only was shown in Year 2: that of the *Bourke Pre-School Program* which sparked off animated discussion, and led to one of the Parent Educator's suggesting that "*we* should make a film."

The meetings were sometimes attended (with the advance permission of the mothers) by overseas or interstate visitors interested in programs involving parents and children. Occasionally these visitors talked briefly to the mothers of their special interests - thus the mothers heard from an eminent Human Development professor about American Indian education; from a Mexican home-school liaison teacher about language development in a pre-school program; from an

Aboriginal library trainee about library facilities and plans on an Aboriginal settlement.

Other sessions involved invited guests. 'Fingerplays' were demonstrated by a kindergarten director. A library adviser gave a demonstration reading and story-telling; and a senior Education Department officer initiated the mothers into the mysteries of the Grade I mathematics their children would soon be meeting.

D. INDIVIDUAL VISITS TO CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS - INTERVENTION PROGRAM I, YEAR 1.

It has not been the Australian tradition for parents to visit classrooms except perhaps on occasional official 'Open Days'. There has been defensiveness and timidity on both the parents' and the teachers' part. Shyness has been highly characteristic of Aboriginal parents. Consequently, a morning spent by an individual mother sitting in on her child's school program was a momentous occasion for all concerned.

The way was smoothed for the success of these visits by virtue of the Senior Parent Educator's having sat in on many classroom sessions of the participating children during the year. This had been done in order to keep abreast of aspects of the school program with which mothers could be acquainted during the Home Teaching visits. Cordial relations had been established with the children's teachers, two of whom had already addressed Mothers' Meetings. These teachers readily agreed to welcome the mothers on individual visits on specified dates.

Of the ten mothers who had begun the program in the first year, only six made these visits. One mother was working; another was overwhelmed with the demands of young babies; another had moved to a different area and felt too uncertain in a new setting to face a visit; the fourth had moved too far to continue in the program.

The six mothers who did visit their child's school appeared to find the morning very rewarding. They were made to feel welcome by the teachers and the head teacher, were introduced to other staff members and had morning tea in the staff room. During the school session, the mother and the Senior Parent Educator sat at the back of the classroom where they could observe and quietly exchange

comments; at times the teacher invited the mother to move among the children at work, and explained some of their activities to her.

Mothers were delighted to see some of the activities with which they had become familiar at home being practised in the school setting. On seeing a table-setting exercise, knives being matched with forks, one mother said with pleasure, "That's exactly what we've been doing at home."

Among their comments were:

"Isn't it nice how they can move about and talk to each other, but they're all well-behaved."

"When I was at school our teacher had a great big cane - she's only got a ruler."

"This makes you see how hard it is to be a teacher with so many children."

"I never realized there was so much to school before I joined the Club."

On seeing the difficulty of some children in grasping a grouping principle her child had already mastered with her help: "You know, *everybody* ought to have a scheme like ours."

Teachers reactions were also favourable. On each occasion the teacher told the visiting mother that she was pleased with her child's progress, a comment that the teachers (with apparent surprise!) had also made independently to the Senior Parent Educator in the later months of the year. One teacher capitalized on the mother's visit by having a writing and drawing exercise on the theme: "Edward's Mum is here today." Edward's pride in seeing his Mum in word and picture in his classmates' books was immense.

The children, indeed, all reacted with pride and pleasure to their mothers' presence, and without exception the teachers remarked either to the mother or to other staff members on the excellent effect of the visit on the children's behaviour and interest.

E. THE SELECTION AND TRAINING OF ABORIGINAL PARENT EDUCATORS

Towards the end of the first year, the notion of employing Aboriginal women as Parent Educators was presented to the mothers at mothers' meetings; after discussion, all endorsed the idea of working with Aboriginal Parent Educators the following year in order to help prepare their four year old children for school.

In December, 1972, three of the mothers with whom the Senior Parent Educator had worked in the Home Teaching Program were selected to become Parent Educators for the following year. These three mothers were selected on the following criteria: warmth of personality, likely ability to communicate well with others, reliability, availability for part-time work, responsiveness to the program, acceptability to the other mothers.

The three women had varied educational and occupational backgrounds. Two had not completed full primary education and had worked only in unskilled occupations. The third, who had completed her Junior secondary education (to Grade 10), and business college, had not been employed.

The eldest had six children ranging in age from two years to thirteen years. The second had three children (age range three to six years), and the youngest had a one year old baby.*

To some extent the initial training of the three Parent Educators had taken place "on the job" during the first year as they participated in the fortnightly sessions with their five year olds. An intensive month's training was provided in February, 1973, in order to extend the insights of the Parent Educators and to help them make explicit their understanding of the purposes and methods of the program so that they might be able to function effectively in their new role.

Each Parent Educator was given a copy of the manual *Workjobs* and during several of the training sessions detailed discussions were held on the principles

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* The youngest Parent Educator had been involved in the program in Year 1 with her mother and five year old brother. In fact, she had played a major role in the implementation of the program in that home.

underlying the activities set out in the manual and possible adaptations of this fund of ideas and activities. The highly structured format of this manual lent itself admirably to this purpose. A similar highly structured program which provided many useful ideas was the *Peabody Language Development Kit*. Both these resource materials were of great value to the project, often leading to new and fruitful variations to suit the local situation and interests of the participating families.

During this month's training, several visits were made to two demonstration kindergartens where experienced staff discussed with the Parent Educators the function and purpose of pre-school activities and equipment. Following these visits the Parent Educators gradually assumed more and more responsibility for the selection and purchase of the library materials for the program.

Towards the end of the month's training the Parent Educators, under the guidance of the Senior Parent Educator, began detailed planning of activities to be selected and arranged for presentation to the Home Teaching families. These planning sessions, led by the Senior Parent Educator and sometimes attended by the Project Director, continued throughout the year as an integral part of the Parent Educators' weekly program. During these sessions, in addition to the planning of activities for the forthcoming week, members of the team exchanged ideas, feed-back comments on the previous week's teaching, information about attendances and mothers' responses and each contributed to suggesting possible improvements in presentation methods.

These planning sessions, like the Mothers' Meetings, were sometimes visited by overseas and other teachers and researchers. Such visitors included Fijian Government officials, a Filipino educational administrator, a Mexican parent educationist working in an Aboriginal pre-school program, a home pre-school liaison teacher from North Queensland, Aboriginal trainee librarians, an Indian village community worker and a North American Professor of Human Development. These visits not only widened the horizons of the Parent Educators but also fostered their confidence in explaining to others their own goals and procedures.

In order to induct the new Parent Educators into the program,

arrangements were made for them to accompany the Senior Parent Educator on her visits to the Library families who were continuing into the second year. The Parent Educators gradually took responsibility for these families with the concurrence of the mothers concerned. Each had responsibility for either two or three Library families; the Senior Parent Educator (since she owned a car) maintained responsibility for five Library families who lived in widely separated suburbs.

In addition, each Parent Educator assumed responsibility for a weekly visit to three Home Teaching families; the Senior Parent Educator retained one Home Teaching family. During the course of the year, there were fluctuations in these arrangements as families came and went. The Senior Parent Educator sat in with each of the Parent Educators on a number of their teaching visits and out of these supervised sessions came useful suggestions for improved presentation and interaction with mothers and children.

SECTION III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. RESEARCH MEASURES

a) VIABILITY OF PROGRAM

This was assessed in terms of the number of mothers who were approached and agreed to participate. Of those who did agree to participate, evidence is presented on:

- .. the length of time for which the family participated,
- .. the reasons for withdrawal,
- .. the frequency with which mothers kept appointments for home visits by the Parent Educators, and
- .. the frequency of attendance at mothers' meetings.

b) UTILIZATION OF ABORIGINAL PARENT EDUCATORS

The Senior Parent Educator worked very closely with the Parent Educators throughout the year. After the initial block training period of one month, she met with them weekly to plan the ensuing week's program. Towards the end of the program, she observed each Parent Educator working in the home with mother and child on several occasions. She evaluated them on the following variables:

Relationship to child: warmth towards child, ability to engage child's participation, ability to present activity to child in comprehensible steps, degree of verbal interaction with child, use of encouragement, creativity and relevance in presentation of activities.

Relationship to mother: ability to relate to mother, ability to bring out principles and value of activities, ability to involve mother in teaching activity, ability to withdraw from dominant role and encourage mother's leadership, ability to promote verbal interaction between mother and child, promotion of mother's use of encouragement, ability to convey to mother the importance of her teaching role.

General teaching role: follow-up of previous activities, ability to elicit or suggest follow-up ideas, feeling of lightness and enjoyment, pace and interest of presentation, flexibility in dealing with unusual situations.

c) EFFECTS UPON THE MOTHERS

i) General Behaviour

As a result of the continuing visits to the participating households (once per fortnight in the first year and once weekly in the second year) the Parent Educators came to know the mothers very well as they functioned within their home settings. Informal, as well as formal, discussions between the mothers and the Parent Educators offered further insights about the mothers and their orientation to their children and to life in general. These data were supplemented from maternal answers to a structured interview conducted in the home.

On these bases, qualitative judgments about the mothers and about the effects of the program are presented.

ii) Maternal Teaching Behaviour

The mother's teaching behaviour was assessed, before and after the program, on the basis of a mother-child interaction task, with each mother being asked to teach her child a sorting task.

The teaching task was in every case conducted in the home by the Senior Parent Educator.

The initial task called for the mother to teach her child to sort a number of blocks which differed in colour (red, blue, yellow), shape (triangle, square, circle), size (big, small) and mark (+, 0). The mother, in the absence of her child, was first asked by the Senior Parent Educator to discover the sorting principles, the only instructions being that the blocks must be put into four piles or groups, and that all the blocks in one group must have something in common. By trial and error and an elicitation approach, the mother discovered that shape and colour were irrelevant, and that the relevant attributes were size and mark. Thus 4 piles could be produced by grouping big and small blocks with a +, and big and small blocks with a 0.

When the mother had successfully sorted the blocks, she was asked to explain the reasons for her groupings, in order later to be able to elicit these from her child. Mothers differed considerably both in the speed with which they grasped the sorting principles and their ability to verbalize these. In order not to interfere with the mothers' own encoding of the sorting process, on no occasion did the Senior Parent Educator supply labels or terms - the extent of her aid to a mother who was obviously tiring in repeatedly unsuccessful sorting attempts was to draw attention to a group of blocks and ask what there was in common about them.

Once the mother had both successfully sorted the blocks and also given the reasons for her categorization, the blocks were reshuffled and the whole process repeated as a familiarization procedure. The child was then called in, and with the mother's permission a tape-recording was made of the mother teaching the child the sorting task. She was told that she could teach him how to sort the blocks in whatever way she thought best, just so long as he learned how to sort them and could explain the reasons for his groupings. The Senior Parent Educator sat fairly close to the mother and child in order to manipulate the recorder and also to make brief notes on the non-verbal interactions (e.g. pointing, smiling, "turning off") between mother and child, and to assess the mother's overall warmth.

At the end of the year the same task was performed again, the mother this time teaching it to her pre-school child. In two families in Intervention Program II*, there was no pre-school child, and it was therefore necessary for the mother to work again with her Grade I child. For these mothers, the blocks in the post-intervention task differed as before on the attributes of colour and shape, and also on the new attributes of thickness (thick, thin) and mark (pink star, green star).

In the second year, a number of new mothers joined the program; each of these performed the initial sorting task, as described, with her pre-school child. At the end of that year, a further evaluation of the mother's interactional style was made. Again, in order to avoid the effects of both mother's and pre-schooler's over-familiarization with the same task, a new task of

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* See Selection of Sample.

comparable difficulty was devised: instead of blocks to be grouped, pegs had to be inserted into holes. Again four groups were required, the pegs differing in colour (green, yellow, blue), shape (round, square), and mark (0 and no 0).

d) EFFECTS UPON THE CHILDREN

In Year 1, the cognitive and linguistic functioning of the target children, who were enrolled in Grade 1, was assessed using the Stanford-Binet, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities. These tests were administered at the beginning and end of the year. In order to assess any diffusion effects, the Stanford-Binet was administered at the same time to the pre-school child in each family.*

An attempt was made to secure data from the schools attended by the Grade I children on their school progress. However, variability in school practice in the keeping of records on Grade I children made this attempt unsuccessful.

At the beginning of Year 2, no further assessment was made of the pre-school children who were continuing in the program. The 4 year old children whose mothers were joining the program were assessed (Stanford-Binet). At the conclusion of the Year 2 program, the Stanford-Binet was again administered to all pre-school children.

All testing of pre-school children was conducted in the children's homes.

It was considered desirable in Year 2 to secure a control group of Aboriginal 4 year olds attending pre-school. Ten such children were located at two pre-schools and their mothers granted permission for the children to be tested. The testing was conducted at the kindergartens. By the end of the year, however, only five of these children remained in Brisbane; these five were re-tested at the end of the year.

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* Note: In two cases the family did not include a pre-school child; the ages of the pre-school children ranged from 2+ to 4+.

2. MODES OF ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

a) PERFORMANCE OF MOTHER ON TEACHING TASK

Tape-recordings were made of the mothers' verbal interactions with the children during the teaching task. Analysis of the transcripts revealed that the mothers' utterances were of two major types:*

- *Content-based* utterances. These were instructions, information or questions that had to do with focussings (*"See all those little blocks there"*) or placements (*"Put them all together"*), or requests for reasons for placements (*"Why did you put those there?"*). Included under this head were also clarifications of such utterances ("Put them into four piles. *Four heaps."*)

- *Motivational* utterances. These were both positive and negative. They included inciting to action (*"Come on,"* *"Keep going"*), exhortations to look (*"Look!"* *"See?"*), praise, encouragement and supportive noises (*"Mmm,"* *"Yes, that's right,"* *"Good girl!"*). Other utterances were designed to inhibit action, such as negative remarks followed by positive guidance (*"Hang on,* aren't you going to ... ?", *"No, that should go there"*), and negative remarks followed by no positive guidance (*"No, that's not right "* followed by silence).

While "No, that should go there" could be said to be corrective feedback concerned with placement, and therefore content-based, it is possible also to identify a motivational element within the utterance. The coding system devised attempted to identify both cognitive and affective elements of the mothers' utterances. (See Appendix II for detailed coding procedure.)

Relating the sorting task to Hess's (1969) family characteristics of significance for school achievement, it can be seen that the task itself is an example of the variable of maternal teaching behaviour, and could be expected to reflect some of the other variables. Accordingly, transcripts of the sorting task were analysed under the following headings (Hess's relevant variables being noted in brackets):

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* In the examples, the italics indicate the category under discussion. The unitalicised portion of a remark is coded in another category.

i) *Global estimation of the extent to which the mother, either initially or later, gave child an indication of the sorting principles underlying task* (use of conceptual rather than arbitrary regulatory strategies).

A 4-point scale was used:

No indication	0
A little indication	1
Fair indication	2
Good indication	3

ii) *Verbal guidance (specific and general)*: to what extent did the mother provide a context of meaning within which the child could perform the sorting operations? (maximization of verbal interaction; use of conceptual rather than arbitrary strategies).

Brophy (1970) used a coding system for a similar teaching task which encompassed both verbal and non-verbal categories. Since we, however, were concerned especially to focus on the quality of *verbal* interaction, we recognized two types of verbal guidance for the purpose of assigning a score:

- instructions, information or requests focussing attention or directing placements, giving *specific* category or principle. ("Put that with the other big dots.")
- instructions, information or requests focussing attention or directing placements, giving *general* category or principle. ("Look at the marks." "They've all got something the same.")

In the case of instructions, information or requests focussing attention or directing placements, where no guiding category or principle was stated, the mother received no score on this variable. ("Where are you going to put that?" "That goes there.")

The mother's score on this variable represents the proportion of her utterances directing placements or focussing which provide guidance (general or specific) for the child in his endeavours.

iii) *Overall warmth towards and support of child* (engagement with attentiveness to child; warm affective relationship with child).

A 4-point scale was used:

Markedly cold and non-supportive	0
A little warmth and support	1
Fair degree of warmth and support	2
Very warm and supportive	3

iv) *Verbal praise and encouragement* (warm affective relationship with child). The mother's score on this variable was derived by calculating the proportion of her total utterances which provided verbal praise or encouragement of the child.

In the coding, three further scores were calculated:

v) *Clarification of utterances:* explanation, on the same level of specificity, of an utterance (maximization of verbal interaction; use of conceptual rather than arbitrary strategies). ("They're round ones. *You know, dots.*")

vi) *Frequency of requests by mother for child's verbalization of reasons for placement* (demand for high achievement; maximization of verbal interaction; use of conceptual rather than arbitrary regulatory strategies).

vii) *Negative response with no positive guidance* (use of arbitrary regulatory strategies.)

Since there was a very low incidence of utterances in the last three categories, no further analyses were executed.

The global estimation of maternal warmth was made by the Senior Parent Educator. The global estimation of maternal indication of principles was made by the Senior Parent Educator and a trained undergraduate. Maternal utterances were coded twice, in accordance with the Coding Schedule given in full in Appendix II. Disagreements were resolved by discussion. Intercoder agreement was 86%.

b) DETERMINATION OF GAINS

The smallness of the sample and the marked heterogeneity of the mothers led to the decision to avoid the use of measures of central tendency.

Rather, in examining the data, our interest was in reporting the characteristics of the mothers and children prior to our intervention program, and in studying the impact of the intervention on individual families.

In the analysis, therefore, we concentrated on gains made by mothers and children. In determining whether any improvement might be regarded as a true gain, we employed the concept of standard error. For the mothers' performance on the teaching task, the standard error was calculated on distribution of initial scores of the total sample (Intervention Programs I and II and Years 1 and 2) and an improvement in excess of 2 standard errors was regarded as a gain. It was felt that this was sufficiently rigorous to exclude counting chance gains as true gains. This procedure was followed in respect to the following variables:

Maternal scores: use of verbal praise and encouragement
use of verbal guidance

There were two further maternal teaching variables: warmth and communication to child of sorting principle. Each of the mothers was allocated a position on a 4-point scale on each of these variables. A gain was considered to have occurred if the mother's rating on the second administration of the teaching task exceeded her rating on the first administration.

Gains on the children's performance were also assessed in terms of standard errors of scores, a gain being recorded if the confidence intervals around the initial and final scores did not overlap. For the Binet the standard error was computed on the distribution of the scores of the total sample. Published tables of standard error were used for the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (Paraskevopoulos and Kirk, 1969).

c) COMPOSITION AND SUB-CLASSIFICATION OF THE SAMPLE

Initially it had been intended that 20 families (two groups of 10) would participate in the program over a two-year period. However, because of problems of mobility and withdrawal, replacements had to be recruited in both years.

Since a relatively small number of families (6 out of 30) participated in both Year 1 and Year 2, all data have been analysed in terms of one year's participation in the program (either Year 1 or Year 2). In the case of the six mothers who took part in both years of the program, data from the first year only were analysed.

In all, 30 families fulfilled this condition of at least one year's participation (14 Home Teaching, 16 Library) but one mother in the Home Teaching group took a job at the end of her year's participation and was unable to carry out the post-program teaching task. Data are therefore available for 29 mothers.

Analyses were made to determine if there were any marked changes within either the Intervention I or the Intervention II program samples, and if there was any difference in the pattern of changes between the two Intervention programs. Two further types of analysis were carried out, the one relating to initial level of performance and the second relating to stability of the family unit.

The program was essentially an exploratory one designed to ascertain whether a Parent Education program could be developed and implemented with urban Aboriginal families and whether such a program would exert any influence on the families. It was important, therefore, to determine whether the programs had a differential effect on different families. One variable which might be considered to affect benefit from the program is initial level of functioning of the mother and of the child. Some programs might be expected to benefit more able people and others to have a greater impact on less able people. In the case of this program it was not possible to predict the relationship between initial level of performance and subsequent change, but it was possible to determine if there was such a relationship. Accordingly, in the case of the mothers, initial performance on each of the four variables derived from the teaching task was considered across the total sample and mothers categorized as belonging in the upper or lower half.*

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* The median was used as the dividing point.

Mothers varied in their location in the upper or lower half on the four variables. In summary,

Table V.7

Levels of Teaching Competence in Mothers in Two Programs

	Home Teaching	Library	Total
Upper half on 4 variables	2	1	3
Upper half on 3 variables	6	4	10
Upper half on 2 variables	2	2	4
Lower half on 3 variables	3	3	6
Lower half on 4 variables	0	6	6
	13	16	29

Subsequent analyses showed that warmth was the only one of the four variables not amenable to change throughout the course of the intervention programs. In studying gains in relation to initial level of teaching performance, mothers were therefore categorized into two groups: more competent (upper half on at least two of the three variables) and less competent. The distribution became:

Table V.8

Global Judgment: Levels of Teaching Competence of Mothers in Two Programs

	Home Teaching	Library	Total
More competent mothers	9	6	15
Less competent mothers	4	10	14
	13	16	29

The earlier discussion of the characteristics of the families in the sample drew attention to the marked mobility prevailing in this group. In addition to the mobility of many of the families there was a high incidence of single parent families. It could be predicted that the stability of the family unit would be a variable affecting the success of intervention programs aimed at extending the mother's teaching competence

and at attracting her to engage in greater verbal interaction with her children. Accordingly, the mothers were divided into two groups: stable family unit and unstable family unit. The family was characterized as a stable family unit if there were

a) a permanent father figure,
b) a permanent mother figure, and
c) stability in residence.

The family was categorized as stable in residence if there had been no move or if there had been only a single move from a lower to a higher standard of housing. Thirteen families met all three of these criteria. Three further families were categorized as stable, even though two lacked a permanent father figure but maintained for the children a highly stable environment; the third moved more than once but again maintained a stable environment for the children who attended the one school throughout the two years of the program. Thirteen family units provided a markedly unstable environment.

The distribution of stable/unstable family units across the two intervention groups was:

Table V.9

Stability of Family Units in Two Programs

	Home Teaching	Library	Total
Stable	5	11	16
Unstable	8	5	13
Totals	13	16	29

d) EXAMINATION OF CHANGES IN CHILDREN

Changes in the children's performance were examined in the light of

i) the type of intervention program
ii) initial performance of the children*
iii) the mother's initial performance on the teaching variables
iv) stability of the family unit

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* On the Stanford-Binet, children were categorized into three groups:

Above average : $\bar{x} + > \frac{1}{2}\sigma$

Average : $\bar{x} \pm \frac{1}{2}\sigma$

Below average : $\bar{x} - > \frac{1}{2}\sigma$

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT AND ITS EFFECTS

The evaluation of the intervention programs is centred on the following questions:

1) Can a parent education program be developed and implemented within the homes of urban Aboriginals?
2) Can urban Aboriginal mothers be trained and utilized as Parent Educators?
3) What effects do the parent education programs have upon the participating mothers?
4) Are there changes in the participating children which may be attributed to the intervention program?

1. VIABILITY OF THE PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

a) EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION

In all, 40 families entered the program over its two year operation. Of these, 4 withdrew within a month, while the initial data were being collected, leaving 36 families who were participants for at least 2 months. Of these 36, 30 (14 Home Teaching families, 16 Library families) completed one full year's program (one year was effectively nine months) while 6 families withdrew part way through the year, their exposure to the program ranging from two to three months.

Of the 30 families who completed one full year, 7 withdrew temporarily for periods of between one and four months, and 11 withdrew permanently after one year. The reasons for all withdrawals, excluding the four families who stayed with the project for less than a month, can be summarised thus:

Table VI.1

Reasons for Temporary or Permanent Withdrawal from Project

Reason	Number
Moved too far to maintain contact	12
Too busy	4
Husband antagonistic	3
Parent Educators withdrew from sample	3
Took full-time job	1
In hospital for extended period	1
	24

Mobility, it can be seen, is the major reason for withdrawal, either permanent or temporary. Under this head are included both moves to distant suburbs and to the country by the whole family, the mother or the target child who might be sent to stay with relatives at a time of family disruption. It should be noted that a move to a distant suburb did not inevitably sever involvement with the program: one mother who temporarily moved out of Brisbane and who valued the program highly, made a long train trip once a week for several weeks with her child to meet the Parent Educator at the latter's home. Another mother who had made a similar move undertook difficult trips by bus and train with all her children and stayed overnight with a relative on two occasions in order to attend mothers' meetings. These occurrences were rare but demonstrated that difficulties could be overcome if the mother felt sufficiently committed to the program.

Similarly, "too busy", while being a valid description of very many of the mothers, may have reflected rather the low priority accorded the program by the mothers who gave this as their reason for withdrawing, since other mothers who were also subject to extreme family demands maintained their commitment to the program.

While Aboriginal husbands and at least one white husband appeared either enthusiastic or neutral about their wives' participation in the program, three white husbands expressed antagonism which precipitated their wives' withdrawal. Remarks made by the mothers indicated that these husbands did not wish their wives or children to be associated with a program identified as "Aboriginal". An explanation made by the Senior Parent Educator to these husbands of the goals of the program failed to change their attitudes. One mother, in some distress, said she would love to come back into the program "if it was for everybody". There was no question of these wives pursuing a policy independent of that of their husbands.

The three mothers who became Parent Educators in the second year were, of course, withdrawn from the program as participating mothers in view of their new role.

Though many mothers took short-term casual jobs from time to time, only one mother withdrew because of full time employment.

Though illness and hospitalization disrupted many attendances, one mother was in hospital for such a lengthy period that she was recorded as temporarily withdrawing from the program.

In general, the holding power of the program might be judged by two different criteria. In terms of the original design, 20 families were to have participated over a two year period. Of the original 16 families, however, only 6 completed the full two years.

Table VI.2

Reasons for Failure to Continue in Project from Year 1 to Year 2

	Home Teaching Group No.of families	Library Group No.of families
Continued	3	3
Withdrew because of appointment as P.E.'s	3	0
No sibling of pre-school age	1	2
Withdrew because of move to country	0	1
Withdrew because of "lack of commitment"	2	1
	9	7

When the holding power is judged in terms of one year's participation, the holding power was 75%, since 30 families out of the 40 who initially joined the project completed one year with the program. Taking 36 rather than 40 families as the number who made a fairly firm commitment to the program, holding power was 83%. This holding power is surprisingly high, since the factors making for withdrawal are major causes of stress and disruption both to a parent education program among Aboriginal families and to all the participants.

b) ATTENDANCE

Apart from the question of withdrawal, what do the attendance figures tell us about the attractiveness of the program to the mothers who stayed in it?

i) Attendance at Home Visits

There appears to be no difference in attractiveness in the two programs overall. The Home Teaching Groups had an attendance over the two years of 71%, the Library Groups 74%, and the overall attendance over the two years was 73%. By attendance here we mean the keeping of home appointments with the Parent Educators.

From Year 1 to Year 2 attendances were well maintained. In the Library Group mothers, there was a tendency to a drop in Year 2 from the high figure of Year 1 (82% - 70%); the Home Teaching Group attendance rose from 69% in Year 1 to 73% in Year 2.

In Year 2, it will be remembered, major changes were introduced:- Three Aboriginal Parent Educators joined the teaching team, as against a single white Parent Educator in Year 1; home visits became weekly instead of fortnightly; the program was concerned with 4 year olds instead of 5 year olds. None of these factors seem to have affected mothers' participation. All attendance figures remained relatively constant except for the high figure of 82% in the Library Group in Year 1. To account for this figure, we turn to the evidence on family stability.

Table VI.3
Mean Percentage Attendance at Home Visits
Stable vs Unstable Family Units

	Home Teaching		Library	
	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr 2
Stable	80	82	82	80
Unstable	64	67	-	55

Overall, across the two programs over two years, the average attendance figures were 81% for the mothers from stable family units, contrasted with 62% for the mothers from unstable family units. Thus marked differences in mean attendance at the home visits existed between mothers categorized as belonging to stable family units and those belonging to unstable family units. Nowhere is this more strikingly borne out than in the

high (82%) attendance figure in the Library Group in Year 1, the year in which all family units in that group were stable. Overwhelmingly, these figures point to family instability as a factor diminishing an otherwise impressive level of participation in the home visits program.

It should be noted that the Parent Educators played an important role in helping to maintain the high level of attendance. They were involved in repeated calls, arduous journeys by public transport, and frustrating periods of uncertainty about the whereabouts of some families. It is a tribute to their assiduity and a measure of the overall response to their visits that their morale remained high.

What conclusions can be drawn from these attendance figures?

The overall attendance over the two groups over two years, 73%, is satisfactory in view of the fact that seven mothers had short periods of withdrawal from the program, and that all the mothers entered the program voluntarily, could withdraw at any time, and were unpaid.

(ii) Attendances at Mothers' Meetings

The overall attendance picture is shown in Table VI.4

Table VI.4

Mean Percentage Attendance at Mothers' Meetings

	Yr 1	Yr 2	Total
Home Teaching Group	65	44	55
Library Group	56	39	45
Total	61	41	50

Here the stability factor appears far less decisive, since eight of the twenty mothers from stable family units as well as ten of the sixteen mothers from unstable family units attended fewer than 50% of the meetings. Attendances can therefore more meaningfully be presented as follows:-

Table VI.5

Distribution of Attendances at Mothers' Meetings
by Year and Type of Program

	Teaching		Library	
	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr 2*
Mothers attending more than 75% of meetings	3	-	1	1
Mothers attending 50 - 75% of meetings	3	4	3	2
Mothers attending less than 50% of meetings	3	4	3	8

*One mother in this group worked fulltime in Yr 2 and was unable to attend Mothers' Meetings.

Combined attendance figures for the two years were: -

Table VI.6

Distribution of Attendances at Mothers' Meetings, Programs I and II

	Teaching Plus Library	
	Yr 1	Yr 2
Mothers attending more than 75% of meetings	4	1
Mothers attending 50 - 75% of meetings	6	6
Mothers attending less than 50% of meetings	6	12

Attendances in general were poor. Overall, across the two groups over two years, attendance was 50%. There was a tendency for lower attendance on the part of the Library Group in both years, and a markedly reduced attendance in both groups in Year 2.

Reasons for Non-attendance at Home Visits and Mothers' Meetings

Although it is clear that other influences beside family stability played a part in the low attendances at Mothers' Meetings, it remains true that family stability is an important factor in maternal participation in the program. Support for this view comes from scrutiny of the main reasons given by mothers or other family members for non-attendance.

Illness, another major factor in non-attendance especially at Mothers' Meetings, also appears to be related to the stability factor. Unless a mother herself was sick, illness caused less disruption to the Home Visit Program than to the Mothers' Meetings, since a child's sickness did not necessarily prevent the Parent Educator from working, if only briefly, with the mother. Mothers, however, were disinclined to come to Mothers' Meetings if any of the family members were sick. The relationship of illness to family stability is illustrated by the fact that serious illness involving visits of children and/or mothers to hospital caused the abandonment of 32 home visits to mothers in unstable family units (N = 16) as against 6 in stable family units (N = 20).

Other reasons for non-attendance which cut across all groups were attendance at Court, at funerals, shopping excursions, visits to and from relatives, going to the races, domestic demands such as washing.

Three major factors appear to have operated to lower attendance at Mothers' Meetings as compared with that at Home Visits; one of these was illness, which, as noted, is a far greater deterrent to attendance at Mothers' Meetings than to presence at Home Visits. Secondly, although transport to and from the meetings was provided, considerable effort is required to have one's housework and washing done and several children bathed and dressed by 9.30 a.m. It is little wonder that some mothers often found it an effort they preferred not to make. Thirdly, shyness was undoubtedly a contributing factor. While it had been anticipated that some mothers might not be receptive to Home Visits from an outsider, it was found that, in fact, the Parent Educator was warmly welcomed. Many mothers, however, found it more stressful to venture out into a group situation and establish contact with a large number of strangers. It might be added that once the ice had been broken, many mothers expressed enjoyment at the social contact and indeed re-established a number of old friendships, but the initial step was one that some mothers found it hard - in some instances impossible - to take. While participation in the Mothers' Meetings was strongly encouraged, mothers were not made to feel that it was compulsory.

In the second year, at least two other factors may have operated to lower attendances still further. Mobility, high overall, rose in that year.

The disruptive effects of such moves have already been described. Furthermore, in the first year, the Senior Parent Educator had accompanied the University bus on its run to pick up the mothers; in the second year one of the three Parent Educators made this run instead. Mothers who may have hesitated, out of politeness, to decline the Senior Parent Educator's reminder of the meeting, may have felt less compunction in saying "No" to a Parent Educator, one of their friends.

2. EVALUATION OF THE ABORIGINAL PARENT EDUCATORS

In this project the Parent Educator's role was a complex one; she had to be both teacher (of the child) and teacher trainer (of the mother). Her basic aim was to provide a teaching model for the mother. In essence her task was to demonstrate to the mother the nature and value of a variety of activities and to help the mother become a more effective teacher of her child. This could be accomplished only through her active involvement with the child in a teaching relationship. The teaching had to be seen, however, by both Parent Educator and mother as a means to an end and the Parent Educator therefore had to be able to stand back and allow the mother to try out the new techniques for herself.

The evaluation of the Parent Educator is therefore focussed on:

- her interaction with the child
- her interaction with the mother.

Evaluation of the Parent Educator was made by the Senior Parent Educator who observed each of the three women working with her families. Judgments on a four point scale were made in respect to eighteen variables. Appendix 2 presents the detailed evaluation of the Parent Educators.

Assessments made on this basis indicated that while the Parent Educators had, from the start, achieved very high levels of interaction with the children, they had not at first, in general, been markedly effective with the mothers in the following respects: explicit formulation for the mothers of the purpose and value of the teaching activities, involvement of the mothers to a high degree in the teaching, withdrawal from the dominant role and encouragement of the mothers' leadership, encouragement of increased verbal interaction between mothers and children, and promotion of follow-up ideas and activities.

By the end of the year some gains had been made in most of these areas. The reasons for these gains are probably several.

The cumulative effect of several months' pleasant association between mothers and Parent Educators and the increased feelings of ease that arose from familiarity may have accounted for some of the increased involvement of the mothers in the teaching sessions.

It is important to remember that, in the first year of the project, the Senior Parent Educator had initially encountered some difficulty in helping the mothers to accept fully their own teaching role; there had been a tendency for them to see the situation as one in which the Parent Educator came in to teach the child. During Year 1, the mothers showed an improvement in this regard. Had the Aboriginal Parent Educators been able to capitalize on these increases in mother participation, their task, in facilitating the mother as teacher, would have been much easier. However, only three of the Home Teaching group mothers from the first year carried over into the second year.

The Parent Educators thus had to start from the beginning with replacement families, and again faced the same tendency for shy mothers to stand back (often literally) and let the Parent Educator teach the child. The Parent Educators, themselves shy and a little tentative at first, often did not find it easy for some time to bring the mother into the teaching circle.

It is suggested that more regular supervised 'sit-in' sessions might perhaps have facilitated parental involvement. For example, as an outside observer, the Senior Parent Educator was quickly able to gauge, and later bring to the attention of the Parent Educator, the relative lack of involvement of one mother who sat on a chair looking down on the Parent Educator and child, who were on the floor. Close contact was impossible between the Parent Educator and the mother, who moreover found it easy from her detached vantage point to go in and out of the room a great deal, missing many teaching opportunities. Simple physical arrangements of this kind - e.g. seeing that all the participants are on the same level so that mutual involvement becomes possible - are absolutely crucial (though of course

not sufficient) to ensure the success of a project such as this where so much depends on the warmth and closeness of atmosphere.

While in discussion later, the Parent Educator wholeheartedly agreed in principle with this point, it was more difficult, as in any new learning, to apply it in practice. At a subsequent supervised visit, the mother was noted to be still a semi-detached observer; but following still further discussion of this by the Parent Educator and the Senior Parent Educator, the former, on yet later supervised visits, was ensuring that the mother was an involved group member.

At the same time, supervisory visits have their limitations. With all the goodwill in the world on the part of the supervisor, there is an inevitable feeling of 'being inspected' which distorts the group relationships and, particularly with shy children, may prevent the Parent Educator from giving a true picture of how she normally operates. Under these circumstances the Senior Parent Educator tried to make such visits always occasions for support, not criticism.

It may be that it was not in any case for some months that the Parent Educators felt sufficiently comfortable in the actual administration of the teaching activities to take up very many suggestions coming out of the supervised visits. As has been suggested, the role of the Parent Educator is complex, almost contradictory one, since she must serve as a teaching model for the mother, yet - virtually simultaneously - stand aside from the teaching role and encourage the mother to assume it. She must do this confidently yet not overbearingly, at the same time keeping up an entertaining flow of activities and coping with the unexpected arrival of relatives, salesmen, or the presence of any number of other members of the family, especially babies needing constant attention. She must keep her sensitive feelers always waving, yet be relaxed and unruffled at the same time.

As in any teaching situation, the acquisition of so complicated a network of responses takes some time, as the Senior Parent Educator found in her first year. Not surprisingly, the Parent Educators tended for some time to interact more with the children than with the mothers. The Senior Parent Educator may have built up a number of the necessary competences,

yet not have been as wholly accepted by the Aboriginal mothers as the Parent Educators in Year 2. As the project ended, they may have acquired just the degree of confidence and relaxation in the teaching situation which would have allowed the flowering of their interactional potential with a new group of mothers. In a sense, the attempt to extend the teaching competence of a group of mothers may have ended just at the point when the Parent Educators' teaching competence was sufficient for them to begin.

The three women evaluated the effects of their year's experience as parent educators upon themselves. All three reported the following effects:

- They became more understanding and patient with their own children.
- They found ways and new ideas to help their own children.
- They felt more confident about meeting people.
- They learned to accept the difficulties and problems of other people.
- They made a lot of new friends.
- They, most of all, enjoyed being their own bosses, that is, being independent.
- "We'd worked out what we were doing but played it by ear - used our discretion about applying it."

None of them, at the end of the project, felt they needed further or different training for this particular job.

Postscript

Two of the Parent Educators are now employed by the State Department of Education as Teacher Aides. Another has gained permanency as a clerical assistant in the Australian Public Service.

3. EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE INTERVENTION PROGRAM UPON THE MOTHERS

A. QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

(1) Effects of Home Teaching Visits in Year 1

In general, the Senior Parent Educator's impression was that these visits were enjoyed by all the participants (frequently including babies,

other children and grandmothers). A mother who often seemed dispirited at the start of a teaching session became markedly more animated, relaxed and gay as the visit went on. Chief among the mothers' reactions, as gauged by the Senior Parent Educator, to their Grade I children during the teaching sessions were:

1. the mother's surprise (often at first, shame and disapproval) at seeing how hard her child found an operation (such as matching 5 tiles with 5 counters) which she herself saw as self-evident;

2. her interest in hearing that her child was not after all inferior, that all small children find such operations hard, and only to be mastered with retelling and practice;

3. her appearance of pleasure in finding that she herself knew enough to be able to help the child practise such operations at home.

With these reactions in mind, the Senior Parent Educator tried to devise activities which, though fun in themselves, could also be extended to the home situation - activities at the end of which one could ask: "What else can you think of around the house that he can have fun practising talking about - listening to - feeling - counting .....?"

At the next teaching session, the Senior Parent Educator always enquired how the activities of the previous fortnight had been extended or practised. There was a highly variable response to this critical question.

Sometimes the mothers said they "hadn't had time"; sometimes they had indeed found creative ways of applying ideas - like the mother who had started counting flower petals with her child, or the mother who was now encouraging her child to tell her the names of all the animals on television. Sometimes both mother and child were eager to show the Senior Parent Educator how they had been working with mats or trains or ladders using the rods which had been provided.

At the teaching sessions the Senior Parent Educator tried to create a climate where praise and encouragement predominated over negative responses to the children's faltering attempts. She tried to create this climate

first of all by example, in her *own* interaction with both child and mother, ("That's good work, Ted." "See how hard this is for a 5 year child; he won't be able to do it straight away, but he's trying hard, that's the important thing.") At the beginning of the year, the mother (despite an honest initial presentation of the project as a way in which mothers could learn new ways to help their own children learn) usually saw the situation as one in which the Senior Parent Educator came in to teach the child while she, the mother, looked on as a passive observer. The Parent Educator therefore made every effort to involve the mother increasingly in the teaching activities, for instance by suggesting to the child: "Ask Mum to start off the train with the rods and see if you can match up the carriages", or by playing a game round the table, for example, "I Spy".

As the mother became less diffident and took over more of the teaching role, it was noticeable that her reaction to the child's incorrect responses was often one of disappointment or scolding. When this happened, the Senior Parent Educator tried not only to lighten both mother's and child's discouragement directly, ("Yes, it's hard, have another go") but also to articulate more directly to the mother the importance of positive encouragement as against purely negative comment. "It doesn't matter if he gets it wrong - you might need to tell him a lot of times. That's the way he'll learn, by hearing it from you." One mother said with surprised insight: "Yeah, I suppose if people rubbish you all the time, you do give up after a bit."

Since a prime objective of the teaching visits was to suggest to the mothers the importance of talking to their children, the Senior Parent Educator also found it possible to involve the mothers more directly in a verbal teaching role simply by diverting the child's questions, spoken or unspoken, to his mother, instead of answering them herself. In one situation there were displayed six plastic animals in a circle on the table, taking part in the Grand Parade at the Show:

Parent Educator: "What's this animal?"
Silence from the child.
Parent Educator (whispers): "Ask Mummy what that animal is."
Child: "Mummy, what's that animal?"
Mummy: "That's a zebra."

Each time this happened, there was a moment of delighted satisfaction as mother and child communicated; perhaps this is one of the simplest yet most effective ways of developing the mother's confident teaching role in relation to her child.

In summary, the Senior Parent Educator judged that overall by the end of Year 1, there was in most homes a more marked degree of verbal interaction between mothers and children, and mothers were more prone to creating an encouraging atmosphere for their children's learning. In some, the mother's praise for a child's efforts, not noticeably present at the beginning of the year, was beginning to be more characteristic by the end of Year 1.

(ii) Effects of the Home Teaching Visits in Year 2

A critical difference between Year 1 and Year 2 was the employment in Year 2 of the three Aboriginal Parent Educators. They all felt that the mothers to whom they made Home Teaching visits could be distinguished on the basis of:

(a) overall willingness to give time to the program,
(b) amount of 'follow-up' activity undertaken,
(c) appreciation of the importance of the teaching role, especially the importance of talking with the child,
(d) feelings of confidence and competence in fulfilling this role,
(e) encouragement rather than discouragement of the child,
(f) interest in making use of stimulating program activities.

In general, the Parent Educators did feel that positive changes occurred in all the mothers who remained in the Home Teaching Program on all or most of these counts.

Evaluating the program's effect on one mother, for instance, one Parent Educator said:

> "At first, I don't think she had an inkling of the importance of mothers helping children prepare for school, but towards the middle of the year she realized how much she could help X. She certainly followed up activities like counting, colours,

> talking about things, especially on TV. At first she used to give him a dirty look when he didn't know things - but later, after she saw how much better he did when he got some encouragement, she saw the light. I'm sure the program has helped her morale."

The Parent Educators often felt that other members of the household were beneficially involved in the program:

> "A. and Grandma were already interested in preparing Y. for school, but there were many things they didn't realize children need to know (like hard and soft, sets, and so on) and they were pleased to have these ideas demonstrated. A. already had some books for children, but did welcome library things. She enjoyed mother's meetings. She was always patient with Y., even at the beginning."

For some of the other mothers, however, the Parent Educators felt the program had been only partially successful in terms of the desired outcomes.

The Parent Educators felt the program had made little impact on only two mothers who withdrew from the program. The family situation of one of these mothers was highly stressful and unstable, and she moved too far to maintain contact. The Parent Educator commented:

> "She knew the importance of helping the children, but she didn't participate much during the teaching sessions. Probably she didn't have much confidence in herself - she didn't know if she was coming or going."

Of the other mother the Parent Educator said:

> "She just wasn't interested - said she didn't have time. The child was very eager, but if the mother isn't, you don't get far. There's no way to improve the program if the mother isn't interested."

Apart from this very small minority of cases, however, the Parent Educators were unanimous in agreeing that the program had been useful both to the participating mothers and children. Not the least of the spin-off benefits was the frequent consultation on family problems and crises that took place between mothers and Parent Educators at home visits. As a result of these discussions, quite commonly the Parent Educators, through their expanding contacts, were able to put the mothers in touch with effective community resources.

(iii) Effects of Library Home Visits

As with the Home Teaching program, the Parent Educators *on the whole* found an enthusiastic response as they tried to bring out the importance for future learning of talking with children, and the ways in which the mothers could help their children, through toys such as "Fuzzy Felt", to develop new ideas and learn new words, and through games such as Tiddlywinks, and dice and card games to develop understanding of numbers, colours etc. The mothers invariably expressed surprise and great interest at finding that a game could also be a source of learning.

The Parent Educators all expressed the view that, on the whole, the families in the Library program benefited more than did those in the Home Teaching program. Since the findings show, as we shall see, that greater gains in teaching strategies were made by the initially lower performing Library mothers, this judgment by the Parent Educators may have reflected reality. It may also have reflected the higher proportion of stable families in the Library program, and the comparatively greater ease with which the Parent Educators were able to keep their appointments with the Library families.

It may have reflected too, the fact that there were proportionally more enthusiastic fathers among the Library families. All the Parent Educators felt that the children made more progress when mother and father worked together with them with the Library materials.

It has been mentioned that a plea was made by many mothers, in both the Library group and the Home Teaching group (where library borrowings, of course, were also part of the program) for library materials "with no little pieces".

This plea was symptomatic of the great difficulty some mothers found in keeping library materials intact, or keeping them at all, a difficulty especially pronounced at the beginning of the project. Some mothers, embarrassed and upset by the loss of books and toys, lost heart and proposed dropping out of the project; others expressed no compunction at all that their children had lost or destroyed materials. For the Parent Educator it was a delicate matter of reassuring the former while reminding the latter

that our resources were limited and lost materials meant fewer all round. Encouraging suggestions were made (often by some mothers to others at Mothers' Meetings) about putting the games and toys on high shelves, or only having them out when mother could supervise; as one mother said, "then they stay a treat". As the project progressed, the level of responsible management of materials rose markedly so that from most families we had 100% returns at each visit; three or four mothers continued to have a management problem, and these mostly preferred to borrow just one book which they could keep track of.

(iv) Effects of Mothers' Meetings

Measured by attendance, Mothers' Meetings were clearly the least successful part of the program. Reasons have already been advanced to help account for this. Actual attendances were boosted not only by up to 12 or 15 children, but also by grannies, friends and neighbours who often came for the ride, and were made welcome. The final meeting, a combined one, was a Break-up Picnic attended by 30 adults and 47 children.

There were a few mothers who made a considerable effort to attend regularly. Even for those who came only spasmodically, the Mothers' Meetings served useful purposes:

(a) They fulfilled an enjoyable social and morale-boosting function; apart from providing a morning out, they were an opportunity for women whose social contacts were restricted to meet new friends and in some cases to renew old friendships.

(b) They gave a sense of solidarity and depth to the whole project, of group purpose in an enterprise potentially able to be extended beyond themselves and their individual children.

(c) They widened the mothers' perspectives on the meaning of education and the community educational resources locally available. All these functions were encapsulated by the mother who remarked: "I never knew there was so much to education before I joined the Club."

(d) They brought the mothers into contact with interesting overseas visitors.

(e) They allowed mothers to lighten common problems and difficulties by sharing them, and, sometimes, suggesting solutions.

(f) They provided an opportunity for the Project Director to reinforce the principles of the project. Contact with the Project Director also provided the mothers with a channel, perceived as sympathetic and non-bureaucratic, for future enquiries about a great variety of personal and family problems.

(g) They gave an opportunity for the mothers' creative expression in making materials such as puppets and scrapbooks.

(h) Since time was always allowed for these creations to be tried out with the participating youngsters, the meetings gave the mothers further opportunity to practise their teaching skills, this time in a group setting, where they could learn from each other as well as from the Parent Educators.

Those mothers (six in all) who participated in the program in both years, reported greater enjoyment at the meetings in Year 2 than in Year 1, probably because of the greater degree of creative participation in making play materials for the children. Those replacement mothers who attended the meetings regularly often commented at home to the Parent Educators about the pleasure they and their children derived from the meetings.

The changing behaviour of the children at the meetings is worthy of note. Whereas in Year 1, while their mothers watched films, they had played under baby-sitting supervision with items from a toybox especially kept for the meetings, in Year 2 baby-sitting was increasingly dispensed with. This occurred partly because the Parent Educators were present and could help fulfil this role, but mainly because the children became more and more participating members of the group, either helping their mothers to make jigsaws, finger puppets and so on; or else gathered in small groups at tables nearby, purposefully making their own.

Some activities had long-lasting effects. The visit of a kindergarten director to demonstrate finger plays has been described. Although many mothers were too shy at the time to join in vociferously, copies of the rhymes were taken home and the Parent Educators reported many mothers and children singing and performing them right through the year.

The Parent Educators themselves, as has been noted, increasingly developed confidence and skill in managing the group and the morning's program as the year progressed.

(v) The Role of the Fathers in the Program

When each mother was first interviewed about joining the project, an effort was made also to see the father (if present in the household) to ensure his acceptance of the project and his wife's participation. If he was unavailable, his wife was urged to consult him, so that divided attitudes would not become a problem later.

Despite this, as has been mentioned, three white fathers, though at first apparently acquiescent in their wives' participation, later obliged them to withdraw, thus earning the epithet from one of the Parent Educators of "clog in the wheel".

Most fathers, where they were present, were either neutral as far as the project was concerned, or, in a few cases, enthusiastic. When one mother embarked on a course of secretarial training lasting several months, the father, who was then unemployed, made time to stay at home for the Parent Educator's visit, and took over the teaching role.

Some mothers reported fathers reading every night to the children from the library books and helping the children to play with the games and toys, and this, the Parent Educators unanimously felt, was reflected, especially in the proportionately more stable library families, in greater benefits to the child.

(vi) Differential Effects of Programs

It had been anticipated that the Home Teaching Group mothers or children might show increased gains over the Library Group mothers or children, since an extra component was present in the program of the former. No conclusions can be drawn from the fact that this did not happen, by and large, in view of the important differences revealed in the two unmatched samples.

However, the following considerations may be worthy of note:

(a) Program II (Library Program) tended to develop more and more similarities to Program I (Home Teaching Program). As the Parent Educators became increasingly welcome at the weekly visits to the homes of the Library Mothers, they tended to stay longer, finding much enjoyment in demonstrating the uses of the toys and books. Because of the careful selection of the

Library materials, the Parent Educators drew attention in these demonstrations to the same developmental concepts included in the pre-planned Home Teaching session of the kind described in Appendix 1. (e.g. the understanding of mathematical concepts developed by dice games, tiddlywinks etc.)

(b) In a paradoxical way the Library Program may have placed more onus for interaction *immediately* on the mother-and-child. The Library Program kept the Parent Educator psychologically in the "demonstrator" role, throwing the onus for interaction through the use of the books and toys firmly on to the mother and child.

In contrast, and in reverse of the aims of the program, the format of the Home Teaching program may have encouraged some mothers to put the Parent Educator in the role of "expert" to whom the mothers left the teaching. Certainly the propensity on the part of some mothers to regard the Parent Educator as coming in "to teach the child" has been noted earlier. This is perhaps an inherent danger - or at least one to be specifically guarded against - in the Home Teaching type of program.

(c) The Library program appears at first sight deficient in the "follow-up activity" component (see Appendix 1: A Typical Teaching Session) which was considered, when planning the project, to be of such importance. It may be, however, that a mother and child who have used and enjoyed the Library games and books will, in fact, follow up new knowledge and concepts in similar ways to those devised by the Home Teaching mothers and children e.g. animals put together in a "jungle jig-saw" will be later identified and discussed on TV programs.

The detailed content of the two programs may matter much less than the reiteration by a respected voice of the idea that the mother is a highly important figure in her child's learning, that she has a great deal of knowledge (much more than she may think) that she can pass on to her child to make his learning more successful, and that her encouragement rather than discouragement of him will also significantly affect his learning.

The differences between the Home Teaching and Library programs may be of less moment than the fact that both can provide the mother with motivating opportunities upon which she may capitalize - building blocks from which, if she will, she may construct a more developmental relationship with her child.

B. EVALUATION OF PROGRAM EFFECTS UPON MOTHERS' TEACHING BEHAVIOUR IN A STRUCTURED TASK

Four measures of the mothers' teaching behaviour were available from the coding and analyses of the transcripts of the mothers' verbalizations while teaching their children a sorting task:

- indication of sorting principle,
- degree of verbal guidance,
- warmth and support of child,
- use of verbal praise and encouragement.

Assessments of the differences on these variables in mothers' pre-program and post-program performance are presented. Answers to the following questions are sought:

.. Are there differences in gains between mothers in the two types of intervention program?

.. Are there differences in gains between initially more competent and less competent mothers?

.. Are there differences in gains between mothers from stable family units and those from unstable family units?

(i) Mothers' Indication of Sorting Principle in Teaching

Table VI.7

Changes in Maternal Indication to Child of Sorting Principle
Initial Performance x Experimental Group

Mothers' Initial Performance	Home Teaching				Library				Total Families			
	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.
More competent	5	2	1	8	1	1	4	6	6	3	5	14
Less competent	4	1	0	5	8	1	1	10	12	2	1	15
Totals	9	3	1	13	9	2	5	16	18	5	6	29

Significant Differences: Home Teaching Mothers - total pattern of changes

$\chi^2 = 8.06$, d.f. = 1, $p < .01$

Library Mothers - More competent vs Less competent

$\chi^2 = 6.66$, d.f. = 2, $p < .05$

The mothers in the Home Teaching Program, as a group, showed a marked improvement in indicating to the children the sorting principles underlying the task; 69% exhibited this improvement. In the group of Library mothers, there was a tendency to a significant gain, but the tendency was not as marked as in the Home Teaching mothers.

The patterns of change, from pre-program to post-program performance, showed no difference between the two groups (Home Teaching and Library).

It is of interest to consider the pattern of change when the mothers were divided into two groups on the basis of their performance on the initial teaching task. Within the Home Teaching group of mothers, there is no difference between the more and less competent, but in the Library group, there is a significant difference; eight of the ten mothers in the Library program who, in the pre-program performance indicated relatively infrequently to the child the sorting principle underlying the task, showed marked improvements, whereas only one of the six in the more competent group did so. When the more and less competent groups are combined across the two experimental treatments, the trend to a difference in favour of greater gain by the less competent group is maintained, although it does not reach a statistical level of significance.

Table VI.8 examines the association between stability of family unit and pattern of change in the mothers' use of this teaching principle.

Table VI.8

Changes in Maternal Reference to Sorting Principle

Stability x Experimental Group

Stability	Home Teaching				Library				Total Families			
	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.
Stable	1	3	1	5	6	2	3	11	7	5	4	16
Unstable	8	-	-	8	3	-	2	5	11	-	2	13
Totals	9	3	1	13	9	2	5	16	18	5	6	29

Significant Differences: Home Teaching Mothers - Stable vs Unstable

$\chi^2 = 8.93$, d.f. = 2, $p < .02$

Total Mothers: Stable vs Unstable

$\chi^2 = 6.17$, d.f. = 2, $p < .05$

The variable of stability of family environment carries a certain amount of explanatory power in interpreting maternal changes in this aspect of teaching; the mothers in the unstable group show a significantly greater improvement than do the mothers in the more stable environments. This phenomenon is particularly marked in the Home Teaching group.

(ii) Mothers' Emphasis on Specific and General Guidance

Table VI.9

Changes in Maternal Emphasis on Specific and General Guidance

Initial Performance x Experimental Group

Mother's Initial Performance	Home Teaching				Library				Total Families			
	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.
More competent	1	3	4	8	-	1	5	6	1	4	9	14
Less competent	4	1	-	5	4	5	1	10	8	6	1	15
Totals	5	4	4	13	4	6	6	16	9	10	10	29

Significant Differences: Library Mothers - total pattern of changes

$\chi^2 = 7.5$, d.f. = 1, $p < .05$

Total Mothers - More competent vs Less competent

$\chi^2 = 13.6$, d.f. = 2, $p < .01$

There was no significant difference in the general pattern of change between the two experimental groups.

In the Home Teaching program, the mothers in the initially weaker group showed some improvement ($p < .10$); this was the case also with the weaker mothers in the Library program ($p < .10$). When the Home Teaching and Library mothers are treated as a total group, and the improvement of more competent mothers is compared with that of the less competent, a significant difference is seen with more of the latter than the former exhibiting gain. Indeed, in the Library group, the mothers who performed well, on this criterion, on the initial task, showed at the end of the program a deterioration rather than an improvement. It may be that these mothers have resorted to non-verbal forms of guidance.

Although no statistical account can be taken of situational factors, it is true that in the case of four of the nine initially more competent mothers who showed a significant loss, their teaching behaviour on the second occasion seemed, to the observer, to be inhibited by the presence of males from outside the family circle. Three of these mothers, in fact, gave a poorer performance than initially on two of the three teaching variables.

Table VI.10

Changes in Maternal Emphasis on Specific and General Guidance

Stability x Experimental Group

Stability	Home Teaching				Library				Total Families			
	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.
Stable	1	2	2	5	2	6	3	11	3	8	5	16
Unstable	4	2	2	8	2	-	3	5	6	2	5	13
Totals	5	4	4	13	4	6	6	16	9	10	10	29

Significant Differences: None

Stability of family unit does not seem to be strongly linked with patterns of change in these mothers in the use of verbal guidance when teaching their children. There is a tendency for a greater gain among the unstable than the stable families, particularly in the Library program, but this does not reach a significant level (p. falls just short of .10 level).

(iii) Maternal Warmth and Support of Child

Table VI.11

Changes in Maternal Warmth and Support of Child

Initial Performance x Experimental Group

Mother's Initial Performance	Home Teaching				Library				Total Families			
	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.
More competent	1	7	-	8	1	5	1	7	2	12	1	15
Less competent	3	2	-	5	4	5	-	9	7	7	-	14
Totals	4	9	-	13	5	10	1	16	9	19	1	29

Significant Differences: None

The most striking information in the above table is that the vast majority of mothers (19 out of 29) showed no gain on this variable. One would expect this personality variable, maternal warmth, to be less susceptible to change than the use of cognitive teaching strategies. There is a slight tendency ($p < .10$) for greater change in mothers who initially displayed relatively little warmth towards or support of their children in the teaching situation; this tendency is revealed in both Home Teaching and Library Groups.

Table VI.12

Changes in Maternal Warmth and Support of Child

Stability x Experimental Group

Stability	Home Teaching				Library				Total Families			
	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.
Stable	2	3	-	5	4	7	-	11	6	10	-	16
Unstable	2	6	-	8	1	3	1	5	3	9	1	13
Totals	4	9	-	13	5	10	1	16	9	19	1	29

Significant Differences: None

It is of interest to note that, if the 9 mothers who did exhibit a gain in warmth and support of child, 6 were classified as belonging to stable family units and only 3 came from the unstable group. All of the 6 mothers from stable units who increased in warmth had originally been classified as exhibiting low warmth and support.

(iv) Mothers' Use of Verbal Praise and Encouragement

Table VI.13

Changes in Maternal Use of Verbal Praise and Encouragement

Initial Performance x Experimental Group

Mother's Initial Performance	Home Teaching				Library				Total Families			
	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No. Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.
More competent	3	4	2	9	-	1	4	5	3	5	6	14
Less competent	3	1	-	4	6	5	-	11	9	6	-	15
Totals	6	5	2	13	6	6	4	16	12	11	6	29

Significant Differences: Library Mothers - More competent vs Less competent mothers

$\chi^2 = 12.74$, d.f. = 2, $p < .01$

Total sample: More competent vs Less competent

$\chi^2 = 9.07$, d.f. = 2, $p < .02$

There was no significant difference between the two experimental groups in the pattern of changes in the mother's use of verbal praise and encouragement as she worked with her child. Overall, only twelve of the twenty-nine mothers improved on this dimension.

Within the Home Teaching group, the χ^2 test does not suggest that level of initial performance is associated with pattern of change, although three of four less competent mothers did improve. This was, however a significant variable within the Library group. The gains in this group were all made by mothers who initially made only a restricted use of praise and encouragement; even so, only half these mothers did, in fact show an improvement. The competence variable exerts a significant effect in the combined sample.

Table VI.14

Changes in Maternal Use of Verbal Praise and Encouragement

Stability x Experimental Group

Stability	Home Teaching				Library				Total Families			
	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.	Gain	No Change	Loss	N.
Stable	3	1	1	5	4	5	2	11	7	6	3	16
Unstable	3	4	1	8	2	1	2	5	5	5	3	13
Totals	6	5	2	13	6	6	4	16	12	11	6	29

Significant Differences: None

There is no association between stability and pattern of improvement in maternal use of verbal praise and encouragement in either program.

SUMMARY : CHANGES IN MOTHERS' TEACHING BEHAVIOUR

While the numbers are relatively small, certain trends can be discerned in analysing the results on the teaching task.

Firstly, and somewhat surprisingly, the type of experimental program in which the mothers participated was not associated with their patterns of change; viewed as a group, the mothers in the Home Teaching Program did not, as we had expected, show greater gains in desirable teaching behaviour than the mothers in the Library Program. Scrutiny of individual gains shows, however, that the mothers in the Home Teaching Group made significantly larger gains than those in the Library Group on guidance,but not on any of the other variables.

Secondly, the failure of the two types of experimental program to exert different effects may have been due to some extent to the distribution of initial teaching behaviour between the two groups. Table VI.15 shows the percentages of each of the two experimental groups in the categories of more and less competent groups.

Table VI.15

Percentages of Two Experimental Groups

in More and Less Competent Groups

Variable	Home Teaching		Library	
	More Competent	Less Competent	More Competent	Less Competent
Sorting Principle	62	38	37	63
Guidance	62	38	37	63
Praise & Encouragement	69	31	31	69
Warmth	62	38	44	56

The significance of this distribution is highlighted when one considers that significant differences in patterns of change were revealed between more and less competent (total sample) on the guidance variable, and between these same groups in the Library Program on the Sorting Principle and Verbal Praise variables.

Thus, thirdly, the programs seem to have been more efficacious in changing the teaching behaviour of mothers who, before the intervention, made relatively little use of the teaching strategies discussed.

Fourthly, in the Home Teaching families, the mothers from unstable units were the ones who were most likely to improve their teaching behaviour, at least as far as indicating to the children the principle underlying the presented task. There was a slight tendency also for these mothers to be more likely than the mothers from the stable families to change their teaching behaviour in the direction of providing greater guidance for the children.

Fifthly, the programs did appear to bring about significant changes in a proportion of the families. Of the 29 families,

- three exhibited significant gains on the three teaching variables*
- ten exhibited significant gains on two of the three teaching variables.

Only six of the mothers (two Home Teaching and four Library) failed to exhibit a significant gain on any of the 3 variables.

A Critical Comment on the Teaching Task as an Indicator of the Mothers' Teaching Style

A major thrust of the program was the 'maximization of verbal interaction' between mother and child. Underlying this was the assumption of the importance of the mother's role in providing a context of meaning within which the child could make order out of his environment. The degree to which the program had made the mother aware of the importance of language in her interaction with the child would be reflected, it was anticipated, in the Teaching Task, in her use of verbal labels which would guide the child by giving either specific or general categories or principles, rather than in utterances containing arbitrary instructions with no guiding principle or category.

However, a difficulty inherent in the form of the sorting task was that provision of a context of meaning need not be exclusively verbal. A mother who pointed from the dot on top of one block to a group of blocks with dots on them, saying: "Doesn't that one go with those?" would have been giving her child specific *non-verbal* guidance (pointing); but since her spoken direction contained no guiding category or principle, either general or specific, (see p.105), her utterance would have been coded as giving no *verbal* guidance. This however takes no account of the fact that the situation was susceptible of being made meaningful *either* verbally *or*

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* The Warmth variable is excluded here, since so few mothers exhibited change in this variable.

non-verbally. The fact that the mother activated a correct response by non-verbal but meaningful guidance in a situation where non-verbal cues were appropriate, tells us nothing about her potential ability in a situation where only verbal cues would be meaningful.

While it might be argued, then, that an increase in a mother's use of verbal guidance in the teaching task does indicate a general increase in her ability to provide a context of meaning for her child, the converse, because of the nature of the teaching task, cannot be argued. Perhaps a different teaching task is needed: one which requires exclusively verbal guidance.

Each mother was told that she could teach her child the sorting task "in whatever way she thought best, just so long as he learned how to sort the blocks and could explain the reasons for his groupings". However, the Senior Parent Educator gradually came to suspect that instead of doing this, many mothers were trying to teach the task in the way they had been taught it: non-specifically (in order not to impose ready-made labels), "by trial and error and an elicitation approach".

Thus quite artificial constraints were introduced into the teaching of some mothers, though others, perhaps more independent, did appear to go ahead and teach as they wished. On occasion, a mother remained non-specific, the child floundering, until she would appeal unhappily, "Can't I tell him what to do?" When invited again to "teach him whatever way you think best," her teaching style would then change, becoming dramatically more specific.

To a certain extent, then, the task tended to be a reflection less of the mother's real teaching style than of the interaction between her and an (initially) unfamiliar "authority" figure whose style she felt obliged to imitate.

A lesson to be learnt from this might be that an even clearer invitation needs to be given to the mother to teach in whatever way she wants. But can she be ordered to feel free?

Slaughter (1975) has suggested one answer to this question, in describing an intervention program modelled on those of Levenstein (1970) and Badger (1971). In order to observe "how mothers actually teach their children", she opted, in her pre- and post-observation sessions, for no teaching task at all. To "maximize the mothers' feelings of comfort and ease", twenty-five minute observational sessions were conducted on the site of the housing projects where the mothers lived; the room was equipped with a couple of magazines, two or three children's books, a TV set, and a few toys, and mothers were simply asked to "be themselves" with their children.

Slaughter reports that :

> "...in this kind of unstructured, as close to ecologically valid, observation session as we can get with mothers of these young children, we find wide variation in *how* they relate to their children." (Slaughter, 1975:8).

May not such wide variation, however, raise its own problems? Where, in the pre- and post-observations, a mother does not merely demonstrate differences in the same behaviours, but engages in quite different behaviours, the measurement of changes is precluded. Moreover, one might ask if even the setting described by Slaughter was not relatively unnatural. Nevertheless, the notion of completely naturalistic observational studies of mothers interacting with their children is highly appealing; such studies, made at home over a period of time, must finally be the most valid way of assessing the effects of an intervention program.

C) CHANGES IN ACHIEVEMENT DEMANDS

As pointed out earlier, one of the home characteristics associated with the child's success at school is demand for high achievement. One method of assessing this (following Winterbottom,1958; McClelland, 1961; Bartlett and Smith, 1966; Smith, 1969) is to ascertain from mothers the ages at which they expect certain achievement behaviour in their children.

A choice of three achievement behaviours was made from Winterbottom's test*: to be proud of being able to do things well; to try hard things for

* Her original list included achievement, independence and caretaking behaviours. Six more clearly achievement behaviours were originally selected, but three were dropped because the Aboriginal mothers, on the whole were extremely reluctant to assign ages of expectation to them. The three which were excluded were : to be energetic in climbing, jumping and sports; to be able to be a leader of other children; to try hard to beat other children in games and sports.

himself without asking for help; to do well in school on his own. Mothers were questioned about expected ages for these behaviours before and after the program.

Data on mothers' expectations on these variables were available on white Brisbane mothers of Grade I children from an earlier study (Watts,1970); these data on mothers from a middle to upper-middle class suburb are included in the following table:

Table V1.16

Mean Ages at which Achievement Demands Were Made by Mothers

Demand	White Mothers	Aboriginal Mothers	
		Pre-Program	Post-Program
To be proud of doing things well	3.33	4.13	4.11
To try hard things for himself without asking for help	4.22	5.31	4.29
To do well in school on his own	5.86	5.94	6.48

It will be seen that the Aboriginal mothers, as a group, expect the child to exhibit pride in accomplishment at a somewhat later age than the white mothers, and exposure to the intervention programs had no effect on their expectation in that area. Interestingly, there was no ethnic difference, before the program commenced, in mean age for expecting children to do well at school on their own. By the end of the program, however, the Aboriginal mothers were stating a later age of expectation; it is tempting to speculate whether this is a response on their part to their children's actual performance at school.

Expectations about the third behaviour - to try hard things for himself - show a change in the Aboriginal mothers. Before the program, they were, on the average, expecting this behaviour about a year later than the white mothers; after exposure to the program, they were matching the expectations of the white mothers.

4. EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT UPON THE CHILDREN

The major aims of the intervention programs were to determine if a parent education program could be developed and implemented for urban Aboriginal

mothers, and, if so, to determine whether changes in aspects of maternal behaviour believed to be significant for children's growth and development could be effected.

If changes in such behaviour can be brought about, one would expect to find these changes mirrored in the children's level of performance; in particular an increase in mother-child verbal interaction, an improvement in the mother's teaching strategies and the capitalization by the mother upon an increased array of stimulus material could be expected to enhance the rate of young children's cognitive and linguistic development.

The extent to which such changes occurred within the children in the research project and the degree of concordance between changes in mother and child were explored. However, it must be emphasized that marked changes in the children could not, in the particular circumstances of the project, be reasonably expected :

a) The period of involvement in the project was relatively brief - at most it extended for nine months and for some of the families it covered as short a period as three months.

b) The program was deliberately unstructured. While some overseas programs have reported significant improvements in children in programs wh[illegible] the mother's interactions with her children have been predetermined and highly structured, we felt that an approach such as this would be of little attractiveness to mothers in our project. Throughout, our emphasis was on showing mothers new ways of interacting with their children, of encouraging them to discover ways in which they could, within their normal environment, increase their verbal interactions with their children and implement certain desirable teaching behaviours. Our concern was to help them, firstly, to recognize that they played a vital role in their children's development and, secondly, to help them to feel competent in what was for many a previously unperceived role. It was our judgment, rightly or wrongly, that asking them to implement a tightly structured program would have led to their feeling dependent on an outside source for ideas.

An approach such as this probably limits, in the short term, changes in children in the narrow cognitive and verbal skills measured by available

standardized tests. It is our belief, however, that in the long run cognitive and motivational changes in the children will develop as the mothers not only extend their teaching competence, but also perceive, accept and enjoy their responsibility for shaping the early learning of their children. This research project, as has been pointed out, was a short-term one. In order to verify or refute our predictions, a study over a much longer period of time would need to be mounted.

The nature of the research samples also makes evaluation of the children's progress difficult. Firstly, there was, for reasons previously explained, no control group for the five year olds. Since 1972 marked not only the involvement of mothers and five year old children in our research project, but also the enrolment of the children in the formal school system, any changes in these children cannot be attributed to the research project. Data on the five year old children at the beginning and end of the year are presented; they do serve to provide some description of a relatively unstudied Aboriginal age group.

The smallness of the samples in the two intervention projects makes it difficult to sort out from the complex interdependent forces at work, those variables associated with the cognitive growth of some but not all of the pre-school children.

a) The Five Year Olds

Test data on the children's performance, at the beginning of the program on the Stanford-Binet and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test are presented in Table VI.17.

Table VI.17

Performance of Five-Year-Old Children on Two Tests of Cognitive Functioning

I.Q.	Stanford Binet f.	P.P.V.T. f.
110 - 119		1
100 - 109	4	-
90 - 99	8	5
80 - 89	1	3
70 - 79	1	5
60 - 69	-	1
N	14	15
$\bar{x}$	94.36	84.19
σ	8.63	11.48

Three children, all of normal intelligence, showed gains, two from the Home Teaching group and one from the Library group. On the P.P.V.T., three children exhibited gains; these were all, on the initial test, borderline retardates. No child exhibited gains on both these measures of cognitive functioning. Three of the fourteen children in fact, exhibit significant losses; data available make it impossible to offer an explanation.

The following profiles record the performance of the two groups of five-year-old children on the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, at the beginning and at the end of the year.

The psycholinguistic profile for the total sample exhibits a slight superiority of visual over auditory channel functioning at both the representational and integrative levels. Psycholinguistic functioning for the group as a whole is slightly depressed, the only significant deficits being in Auditory Association and Grammatic Closure.

The treatments did not effect substantial changes in pre- and post-test profiles. Some sub-tests (Visual Reception, Auditory Memory, Grammatic Closure) show slight increases, and the remainder very slight decreases.

The pre- and post-treatment profiles of the Home Teaching families do not differ substantially from the total sample profiles. Slight post-treatment increases are observed in Visual Reception, Manual Expression, Grammatic Closure, Auditory and Visual Memory. The remaining sub-tests exhibit slight decreases with the exception of Verbal Expression where the difference is substantial.

The pre-test and post-treatment profiles of the Library families also resemble those of the total sample. This group exhibits slight post-treatment gains in Visual Reception, Auditory Association, Visual Association, Verbal Expression and Grammatic Closure. With the exception of Grammatic Closure (which correlates more highly with representational level than automatic level skills), all gains for this group were in representational level subtests, in contrast with the Teaching families who showed slight improvement in some sub-tests at both levels.

FIGURE VI.1

TOTAL SAMPLE - PRE AND POST TREATMENT

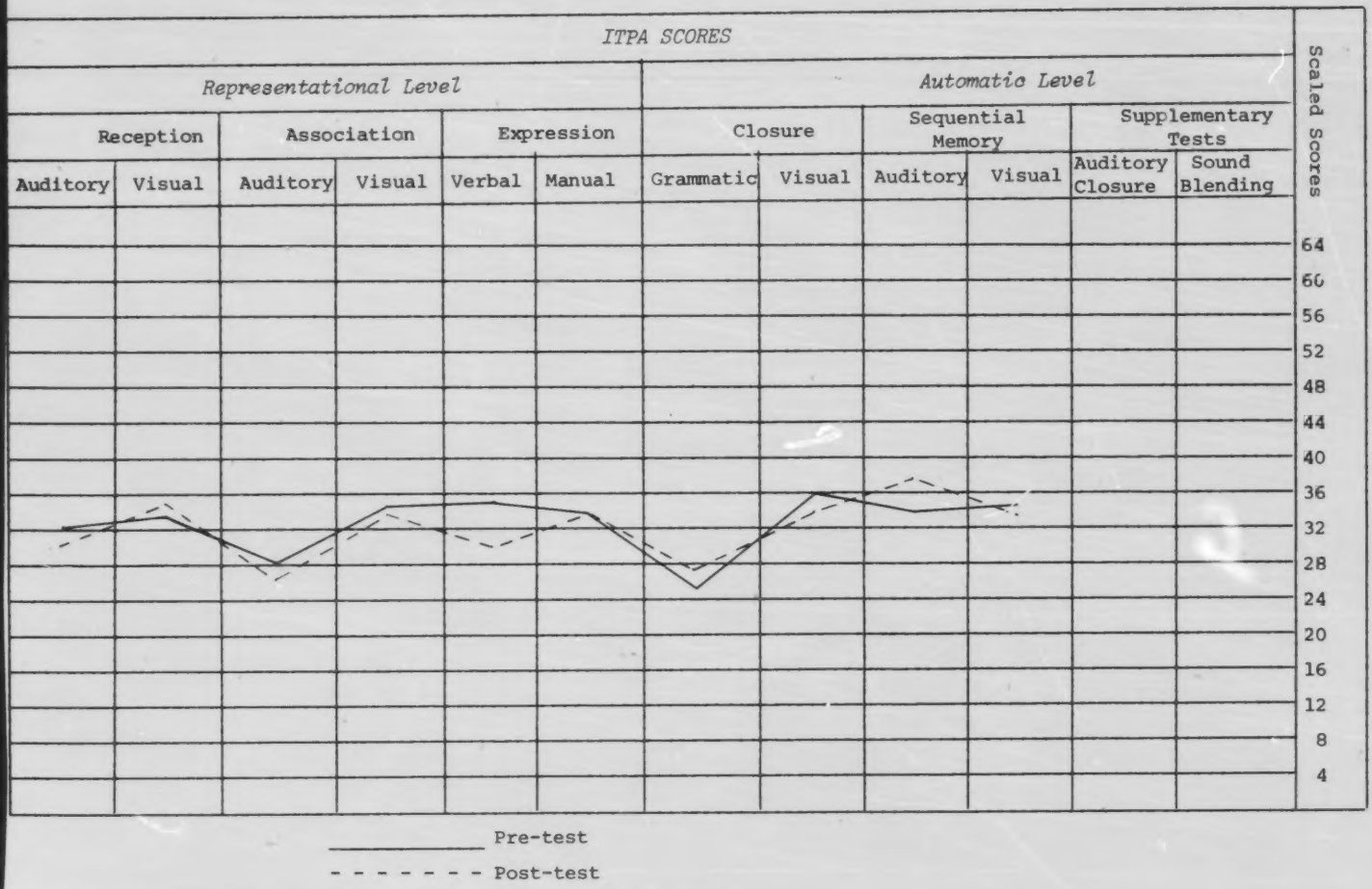


FIGURE VI.2

TEACHING FAMILIES - PRE AND POST TREATMENT

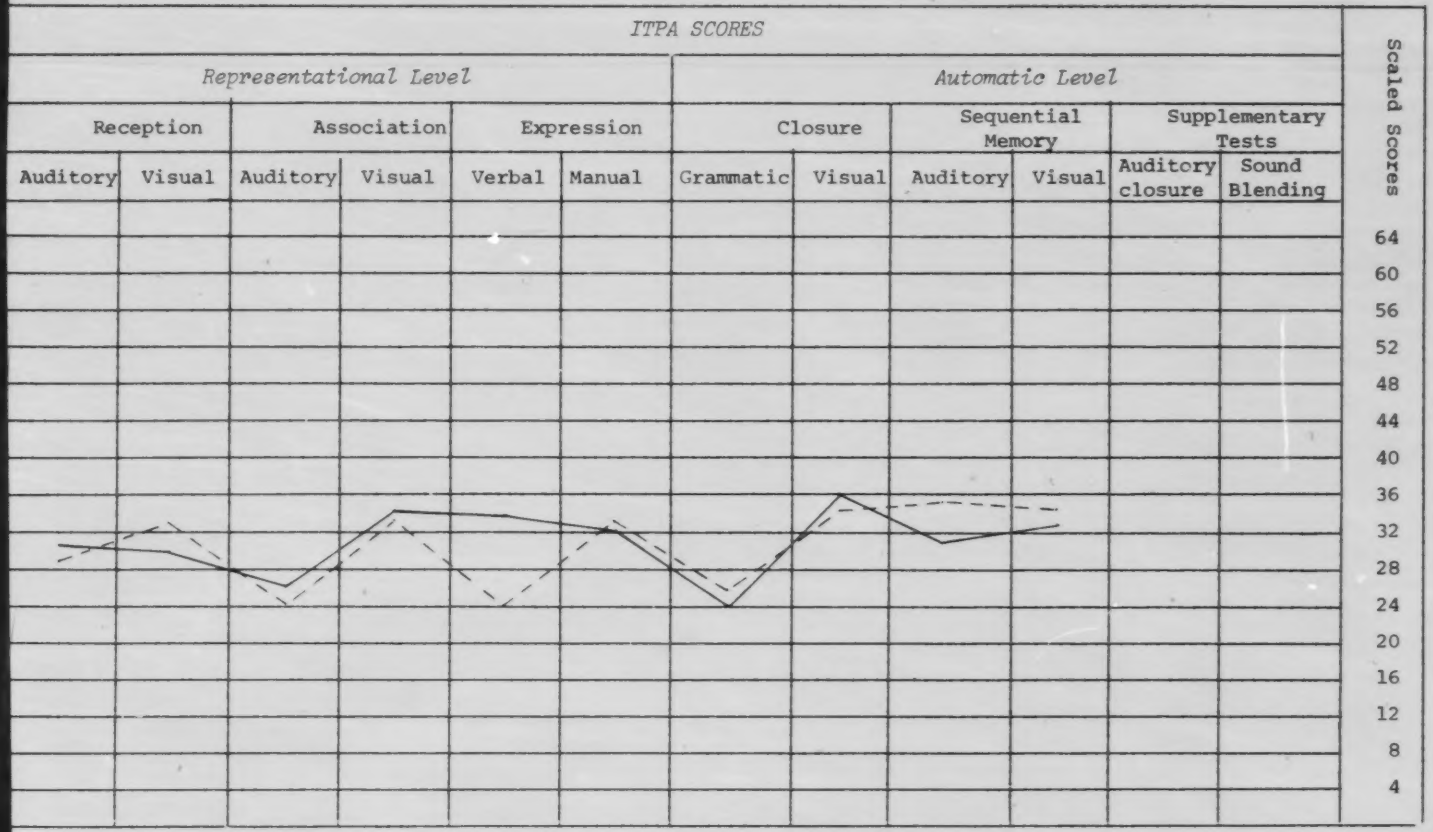
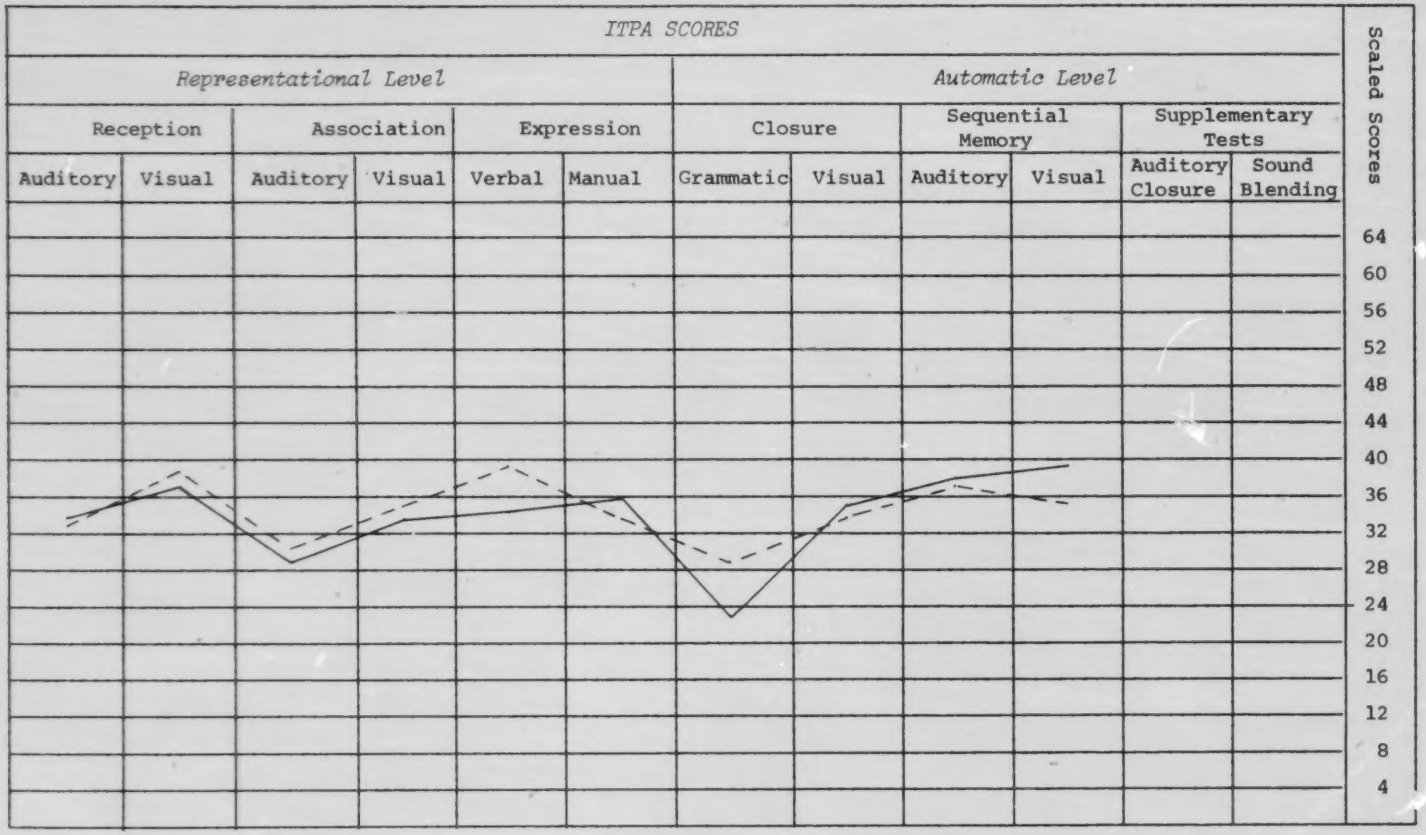


FIGURE VI.3

LIBRARY FAMILIES - PRE AND POST TREATMENT



The different pattern of gains shown by the different treatment groups suggests that the greater focus on verbal interaction between mothers and children in the teaching program may be instrumental in improving automatic level skills.

b) The Pre-School Children

Data on the Stanford-Binet performances of the pre-school children are presented in Table VI.18.

Table VI.18

Stanford-Binet I.Q.'s of Aboriginal Pre-School Children

I.Q.	1972 Group (non-target children) f.	1973 Group (target children) f.	1973 Group (control) f.
120 - 129	1	1	1
110 - 119	4	3	1
100 - 109	0	5	0
90 - 99	4	4	1
80 - 89	2	5	2
70 - 79	2	0	0
< 70	1	1	0
N	14	19	5
$\bar{X}$	96.14	95.53	101.20
σ	17.05	17.53	17.53

On the basis of these results, the majority of the children are seen to be of average or above average I.Q. Three could be described as borderline mentally retarded and one (I.Q.42) as moderately mentally retarded.

In the experimental groups, ten of the 33 children exhibited significant gains; these were spread across the four groups:

	Proportion Exhibiting Gain in I.Q.
1972 Home Teaching (not target child)	$^4/_9$
1972 Library (not target child)	$^2/_5$
1973 Home Teaching (target child)	$^2/_8$
1973 Library (target child)	$^2/_{11}$

In contrast, none of the five control children who attended kindergarten for the year exhibited a gain.

Successive analyses revealed no association between the pattern of gains and i) type of intervention program, or ii) target or non-target child, or iii) mother's improvement strategies. The two variables that did emerge as significantly associated with gain in I.Q. (in terms of proportion of the group who improved) were stability of family unit and initial poorer performance on the test. If one regards children with I.Q.'s below 92 (i.e. $\bar{x} - \frac{1}{2}\sigma$) as poor performers, one finds the following pattern:

Table VI.19
Gain in I.Q. associated with Initial Test Performance and Stability of Family Unit

	Child's Initial I.Q.					
Family Stability	Poor Performers		Average Good Performers		Totals	
	No. who gained	Sub-Total N	No. who gained	Sub-Total N	No. who gained	Sub-Total N
Stable	6	7	2	10	8	18
Unstable	2	5	0	11	2	16
	8	12	2	21	10	34

Thus the pre-school children most likely to gain were those of lower ability from stable family units.

One of the children who showed a significant gain is worthy of special mention. In the pre-program test, he was at first found to be untestable. A further attempt early in the program led to a result of I.Q.42. At the end of the program this child gained an I.Q. of 67. He was from a stable family where the grandmother (the caretaker) initially believed there was little she could do to help him. Considerable attention by the Parent Educator led to a more positive approach to the child by the grandmother.

In the Home Teaching groups there was greater direct encouragement of the mothers to interact verbally with their children than was the case in the Library groups. In the former, six of the seventeen children exhibited gains, as compared with four of the sixteen Library families. A larger sample with a careful initial matching of the characteristics of the two groups would allow researchers to determine whether the increased intensity of contact in the Home Teaching group in fact advantages the children more than the types

of stimulus provided in the Library Program, or whether the support and examples provided to the mother in the second type of program are sufficient. Larger samples would also help to determine the types of program most helpful to children of differing levels of ability in families varying in stability.

Approximately one-fifth of the children (4 from the Home Teaching and 3 from the Library group) showed significant losses. Again the variability in performance of young children may not be a sufficient explanation and further study of such children is warranted.

The Importance of Non-Cognitive Outcomes for Children

The study attempted to measure cognitive outcomes only. Bronfenbrenner points to the importance of other outcomes, which further studies need to take into account:

> " First, there are many important aspects of the development of the human being besides the intellectual, especially the particular kinds of cognitive skills measured by standardized tests. In terms of the child's fulfillment as a person, such factors as emotional security, self-esteem, and the realization of special talents may be no less important than intellectual performance.
>
> As for the social realm, especially in our times, such qualities as generosity, cooperativeness, responsibility and compassion may be of greater moment both to self and society than the ability to perform the restricted kinds of cognitive tasks called for in objective tests. .....There is also the question of whether the forms of preschool intervention which are most successful in raising the child's performance on objective tests may do so at the price of inhibiting the development of other desirable human qualities, including even such intellectual functions as critical analysis, curiosity and creative thought." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 2-3).

Caldwell, reviewing what we have learned from a decade of early intervention programs, also warns against a too-narrow evaluation of the outcomes of programs, and points up the problem of the limited techniques available for measuring outcomes:

> " We have learned that in our legitimate preoccupation with evaluation, that handmaiden of accountability, we took too narrow a view. Why did those of us who offered recommendations about evaluation designs back in the early days of the early intervention movement permit ourselves to get locked into the

use of IQ tests, when most projects were really not concerned with IQ per se? The early extravagant promises about what Head Start would achieve did not include raising the IQ. Most of the statements referred only to school achievements. But because we knew that school achievement is highly correlated with IQ, especially during the early school grades, we allowed ourselves to be seduced into using this measurement. Why? Like Everest, the techniques were there - and we trusted them to a certain extent. On the other hand, we had relatively little trust in most of the available measures of the other characteristics we were hoping to impact - self-concept, attitudes toward school and society, mental health, feelings of personal worth, self-discipline, and general happiness." (Caldwell, 1974: 494).

CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION OF THE PARENT/CHILD APPROACH

World-wide, a number of intervention programs have focussed on the parent/child system. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of many of these programs in the short term, let alone the long. However, it can be said that some programs have proved viable for periods of up to two years and more (Nicholls, 1974; Badger, 1971). In the program we have just described, it had been intended to work with the same mothers over a two-year period; this did not prove possible because of the special exigencies of the program (recruitment of Parent Educators from within the ranks of the mothers; replacement, in the second year, of families with no younger sibling). But of the sixteen original mothers, only four failed to continue into the second year because of lack of commitment or moves to the country.

The viability of parent/child programs, in terms of organizational feasibility, availability of personnel and above all parental response is confirmed by Poulton (1975) who surveyed seven British home visiting programs with an educational focus on parents and children. Of these programs involving 15 visitors and 129 families, he writes:

> " The most encouraging and sustaining result has been the warm acceptance of the visitors by the great majority of families. Only two families withdrew during the period of the initial schemes from September 1973 - June 1974. Many of the visitors mentioned that children and parents looked forward to their weekly meetings. " (Poulton, 1975: 4).

Thus, in the short term, it appears that such programs can be successfully mounted. On the question of their long term effects, however, Tizard (1974) has raised doubts, comparing the disappointing long term results of group pre-school programs for disadvantaged children with what she claims are the equally disappointing results of home visiting programs:

> " American experience suggests that just as the effect of school programmes for the young child 'wash-out' without later reinforcement, so the improvements in children's test scores which may accompany home visiting schemes are not sustained once the visiting stops." (Tizard, 1974: 22).

While it is true that some American programs incorporating a home-visiting element (e.g. Weikart, 1967; Gray and Klaus, 1968; Karnes, 1969a) have indeed demonstrated disappointing "wash-out" results over the long term, evidence has been quite the reverse with others (e.g. Karnes, 1968; Karnes,1969b); Levenstein, 1970; Gilmer, 1970). Bronfenbrenner's analysis of those programs in which gains were more enduring suggests that more positive long term results may be a function of three main factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 34):

(1) the age of the child - "The highest and most enduring gains were obtained with two-year-olds" with gains descending with the ascending age of the subjects;

(2) the form of the program - data appear to confirm the view that home intervention is most effective when it can "induce verbal interaction between mother and child around a challenging task";

(3) "emphasis on the importance of the parent as the primary agent of intervention".

Encompassed by these three factors are important sub-issues with which programs concerned with parents and children must come to grips. Maximising verbal interaction around challenging tasks means determining the length, structure, focus and setting of programs. Emphasis on parental primacy involves consideration of the role and training of Parent Educators, and of the whole scope of parent educator programs.

We examine these questions in turn.

1. TARGET AGE-GROUP

Our program was addressed initially to mothers of five year olds because we thought it would thereby be made more meaningful to the mothers. (A further reason was to test diffusion effects on a younger sibling). We felt that in the first year of the program, mothers would

find the argument that they were vitally important to their children's learning more immediately relevant and comprehensible when they could see themselves helping their children, through activities at home, with procedures that would be useful to them in the school career they were already beginning. In the event, when a number of new families had to be found in the second year, the replacement mothers, this time with four-year-old children, were just as enthusiastic as the mothers of five year olds had been the year before. It would appear then, especially in view of the warm response of mothers to a variety of British and American programs, that maternal interest in such programs may be fired whether the child is of school age or younger.

The effectiveness of the programs, however, may be in large part determined by the age of the child involved in the programs. Indeed, Staines (1974), who considers that parents are especially open to new approaches in child development just before and after the birth of their first baby, has developed a program, based partly on that of Gordon (1975), in which Parent Educators begin visiting families at these earliest possible stages. Such an approach finds convincing research support, discussed earlier, in the growing documentation of cognitive and affective development from the very earliest days, and of the intricate reciprocity of parent/infant interaction.

The closeness of the parent/infant bond is a cogent reason for early rather than later intervention. Bronfenbrenner argues the case:

> "....the research evidence indicated that the infant's dependency on the mother develops gradually over the first year of life, reaches a maximum in the second year, and then decreases as the young child forms new attachments and interests. This finding implies that a mother-infant intervention program begun before three years of age would be more effective than one initiated later".
> (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 26).

Longitudinal results from Levenstein's program (1970), in which mothers and infants were stimulated to communicate round the activity of playing with toys, showed that it was the youngest children in her experimental groups, the two year olds, who achieved the greatest and most enduring gains.

Gordon's (1975) results from Florida further reinforce the conclusion that the most lasting effects come from the earliest parent intervention. In his program, children varied according to entry age and length of exposure to the program. The only group which, two years after leaving the program, maintained significant gains over controls had had two years of parent intervention, with group intervention in the third. Parent intervention for these children had begun in the first year of life.

2. LENGTH OF PROGRAM

In our program we were not able to identify either qualitative or quantitative differences between the small group of mothers and children who stayed with the program for two years (N=6) and the group whose exposure was one year (N=24). Longitudinal data which might show later developing differences are not available; there were confounding variables; and the numbers were, in any case, very small.

In determining optimal length of programs, an important criterion must be the time necessary for the mother to internalise new behaviour patterns stimulated by the program, patterns which must mesh in with her existing behavioural and cognitive structures. It will take a certain time for this to happen, if at all. At the same time, since one of the goals common to all programs is that of parental competence, including the notion of self-responsibility and independence, one essential aim of any program will be to become eventually unnecessary, 'to work itself out of a job'. In Harrison's Home-Start program (1974) it was made clear to participating families at the outset that visits would not last longer than a year, though at the end of that time visitors often continued to call every now and then as friends.

Programs such as those of Karnes (1969), Levenstein (1970), Gordon (1975) and our own, which attempt to test the underlying assumptions on which parent/child intervention is based, need to build sufficient time into their research design. Since they aim to help the mother redefine her role vis-a-vis her child they may have to be in operation for a lengthy period of time before measurable changes in the child are evident. For example, in Badger's program (1971), which was part of the overall Karnes project, mothers attended weekly meetings devoted partly to

child-centred activities and partly to mother-centred needs: two years were required before the differences between these infants and a control group became established.

Gordon's results (1975) cited earlier underline the point. Not only were the children whose IQ gains were maintained those who with their parents had embarked earliest on an intervention program; they were also those for whom the program had been sustained longest, over a period of three years.

Effectiveness of any program is, of course, largely dependent on the effectiveness of its implementation. Reaching full effectiveness may also take time. When the Parent Educators in our program first began their work, they tended to find it easier to interact with the children than with the mothers. This was partly a matter of diffidence. On the other hand, Gordon (1975) describes a reverse hazard which his Florida Parent Education Program encountered in the early days. This was what he calls the "major problem of convincing parent educators to be more open and flexible and less ordering and autocratic". (Gordon, 1975: 29). What is needed, in Gordon's phrase, is for Parent Educators to play ping pong with the mothers. When our program ended, the Aboriginal Parent Educators, each with a year's experience in the role, unanimously felt that they were just getting into their stride, just beginning to play ping pong.

Program outcomes are not only dependent on the program and those who implement it but also upon the entering characteristics of the parents and children. This must be true not only of outcomes but also of the time taken to effect outcomes. Harrison, for example, reports that in the Home-Start program some mothers appeared, after relatively few visits, to have an expanded perception of their educative role and competence; home visitors found that with other mothers:

> "....they spent their first few visits just listening to and chatting with the mother.....So often the mother needs someone to boost *her* confidence, before she in turn can begin to stimulate and meet the emotional needs of her own children." (Harrison, 1974: 3).

Such considerations reinforce the need for programs capable of being sustained over considerable periods.

Scepticism has been expressed by such writers as Tizard (1974) both as to the genuineness and the lasting nature of changes in children's achievement attributable to home visiting programs. This scepticism extends to changes in parental behaviour. She suggests that internalisation of new behaviour patterns may not have taken place at all, no matter what the length of the program:

> " It is not known whether changes in parental attitudes 'wash-out' too, nor whether changes in parental behaviour ever in fact occurred." (Tizard, 1974: 22).

We believe that our program does offer some modest evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, of such changes. Similar data are available from, for example, the Educational Priority Area West Riding Project where greater parental encouragement, interest and awareness were observed, taking such tangible forms, as the program proceeded, as the spontaneous purchase by some parents of developmental books and toys (Smith, 1975).

Badger (1971) attributes many of the changes observed in the children in her program to changes in the mothers in both their personal and community orientations, changes achievable only over time.

> " Any program for the disadvantaged that directs itself to the education of parents hits the real target. Behavioural characteristics related to a child's success in school and society are learned at home and extend from parent to child. If parents feel a sense of defeat and hopelessness, so will their children; but if they exude a feeling of self-confidence, this will be transmitted to their children.....
>
> Change in the mothers' attitudes began when they discovered they were effective teachers of their infants and toddlers. As they learned to control and order their lives in one area, they extended control to other areas. One manifestation of their new sense of self-determination was a changed attitude toward birth control. In this highly fecund group only one mother became pregnant during the 2 year period.
>
> Time is an important ingredient in any program that hopes to effect attitude change coupled with social action. In the first year of this program numerous attempts on the part of the leader to encourage community involvement met with discouraging results. These mothers had spent the greater

> part of their lives "tuned out" to the world around them. For them the goal of existence was to survive. Only very slowly did they learn how to listen and to speak in a group. The various kinds of community activities in which members of the group engaged during the second year of the project, compared with the resistance and defeatism encountered during the first year, clearly indicates that *time* is a requisite in the evolutionary process of a group approach." (Badger, 1971: 172).

3. STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

The structure of a program grows like a plant out of its philosophical roots.

The educational consequences of cultural deprivation theory are that deficits should be remediated through a precise, structured, teacher-initiated program.

Cultural difference theory would suggest that, in the words of Nurcombe:

> "....it is inappropriate and ineffective to impose objectives upon culturally different people who have had no say in their design. Educators must understand the culture of those they seek to teach.....The aim should be for adults from the indigenous group to replace Europeans when enough have been trained." (Nurcombe, 1975: 3).

Our program attempted a resolution of the cultural deficit/difference controversy. Such a resolution is at least possible because there are in fact some goals and values which a minority group may *share* with a majority group but which it has been deprived of the possibility of implementing. Here, areas of deprivation need to be identified and measures taken to permit more effective realisation of goals. There are also goals and values on which majority and minority groups *differ*; here respect and an appreciation of difference is the proper course.

Among the contributions of cultural deprivation theory to the Brisbane program were the recognition on the part both of the project staff and the participating parents of an area of overlap between mainstream parental goals and program goals - namely, the desirability of school success; the recognition also of a disparity between those goals and some

present means of achieving them; and the possibility of stimulating, by way of new information and ongoing support, new behaviours in the service of those goals.

The contribution to the Brisbane program of cultural difference theory lay in the respect of the program personnel for the values held by the parents, whether overlapping or different from their own; in the encouragement of parents to develop their own methods; in the wish of program personnel to listen to and learn from the mothers; in the ongoing modification of program procedures in the light of consultation and feedback from all its participants; in the increasing responsibility taken for the project by its Aboriginal staff members.

The marriage of deficit and difference theory, involving the dynamic interplay of shared and differing goals, led naturally to a semi-structured approach. Shared goals and a need to work towards more effective ways of realising them created a responsibility, we believed, for the teacher - or in our program the Parent Educator - to introduce information, activities and support to that end. At the same time the differences between the teacher and the taught - or the Parent Educator and the mothers - meant that the mothers would have distinctive contributions of their own to make and that the program would be open to modification. Indeed the sessions became more interesting as the Parent Educator learnt as much from the mothers as she gave to them, and the roles of initiator and respondent were often interchanged.

Not only was the program concerned to stimulate the *child's* cognitive development in this way, but additionally *maternal* cognitive development, through the mechanism of affiliative motivation, might also be stimulated when a long term relationship between parent educator and mother allowed for *their* enduring and reciprocal interaction around challenging activities.

In line with the aim of sharing responsibility for initiation and response, the Brisbane program did not adopt the approach of programs such as those of Levenstein (1970) and Karnes (1969) in which tightly pre-structured activities were introduced by the program staff - an approach

capable of producing dramatic and even longlasting results, but perhaps at the cost of violating the participants' life-style, so that activities might well become crutches rather than springboards to the mothers' own creative functioning. While in the Brisbane program materials and activities *were* introduced by the Parent Educators, and indeed pre-planned at weekly planning meetings, these activities were always designed with a potential for modification as seemed appropriate to the children, the mothers or the occasion. And some activities were mother initiated.

How alien, it may be asked, are such materials and activities to the households in which they are likely to be introduced? Materials and activities may indeed be so far from parents' usual modus operandi as to have very little relevance. Yet a survey by Hubbard (1974) revealed toys and some books in many working class homes. Though they may not be present in profusion, dominoes, cards, cheap children's books are not alien to the culture of the participants in parent education programs. Their relative novelty in many homes is likely to be an advantage rather than a disadvantage in adding zest and interest and sheer fun; but the underlying value of their introduction (requiring naturally, sensitivity and flexibility on the part of the Parent Educator) lies in the developmental opportunities they make possible. It is the principles for growth and learning that lie within the dominoes, the cards, books etc., to which the visitor will be seeking to alert the mother. If these principles are effectively perceived and internalised they may well have generalised carry-over.

Thus a mother who has discovered that playing dominoes gives opportunities for her child to learn to count - something she had not thought of as an activity in which she could help - may greet the Parent Educator next time with excited news of other situations in which she and the child have counted together: e.g. going upstairs to bed, or counting the petals of the flowers.

The West Riding project describes the way parents in that program became more aware of the possibilities of play materials:

> " Parents became more conscious of the value and usefulness of toys and play. Most of the children were well provided with large toys such as prams, bicycles and toy cars, but very few of them had books or small 'educational' toys such as jigsaws or building blocks. This is partly because these toys are not widely available or advertised, and partly because even if parents knew of their existence and where to buy them, they would not know if they would be suitable for their child. When the parents saw what their children liked and could cope with, they began to look round for similar toys and books." (Smith, 1975: 145).

A similar report comes from the Home Link program in Liverpool (1974).

It has been emphasised that the Parent Educator needs flexibility and sensitivity to the perceptions of the parents she is working with. Materials, games, toys which may match one mother's perceptions may indeed be alien to another, or may not suit her at quite the same time. Thus predetermined structure, rather than the appropriate introduction of structured materials per se, was the factor rejected by a number of British programs and by our own, in contrast to some of the earlier U.S. programs.

4. FOCUS OF PROGRAM

This report has strongly supported the notion of the *parent/child system* as the most effective target for early intervention. There are, however, other approaches.

a. Focus on Child

While the dramatic short-term gains of some programs involving only the child are well documented, so also are the disappointing long-term "wash-out" effects (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Hence Bronfenbrenner's designation of parental involvement as an essential 'fixative'.

A number of studies, originally focussing on mother/child have tended, at later stages, to give less attention to the mother. In a study by Karnes (1969b), a group of disadvantaged mothers attended a centre, learning ways of using instructional toys at home with their infants; the teachers also visited the homes fortnightly to demonstrate teaching

techniques. Later, a similar program (Karnes, 1969c) was conducted with a further group, with the addition of a pre-school component. While the children in the first program made significant gains in comparison with matched controls, this was not so for the second group: the control children gained slightly more.

Karnes offers a possible explanation of the motivational effects of changes which had been expected to augment, rather than diminish, program efficacy:

> " These changes, which seemed relatively minor at the time, coupled with the child's preschool attendance may have significantly altered the mother's perception of her role in this program. In the short-term study, the mother was aware that she was the only active agent for change in her child, and as she became convinced of the merit of the program, she increasingly felt this responsibility. The fact that project staff placed a similar value on her role was demonstrated to the mother by the weekly checklist and the biweekly home visits to evaluate her work. In the longer study, mothers appreciated the value of the activities for their children but may have over-emphasized the role of the preschool in achieving the goals of the program. Teachers, through their actions rather than direct statement, may have unwittingly reinforced this devaluation of mother child interaction...." (Karnes, 1969c: 211).

A somewhat similar hypothesis, it will be remembered, has been advanced to account for the unexpected failure of the Home Teaching Group of mothers in our program to show significant gains over the Library group. It was suggested that this might have been due to the Library mothers assuming more immediate responsibility for interaction with their children, while the Home Teaching group may have tended to assign responsibility to the Parent Educator. (In this case, of course, the issue is clouded by our failure to match the two samples.)

Similar questions are raised by the reports of the two West Riding home visiting programs, conducted in successive years (Smith, 1975; James, 1975). The first program called for the visitor to work closely with the parents who were seen as the primary educators. In the second year there was a shift away from the mother and child as the simultaneous foci of the program towards the child as the object of particular emphasis. Systematic preparation for entry to the school program became the aim.

In the first year parents were described as eager participants. They were asked for comments on activities they had followed up with their children during the previous week:

> " All the mothers enjoyed doing this and greeted the home visitor the following week with excited descriptions of how he reacted, how his brothers helped him, or how he had worked it out for himself." (Smith, 1975: 155).

By contrast, parental participation in the second year's program appeared less than whole-hearted:

> " The technique of introducing 'parental tasks' was persisted with for some time trying several different formats. Sometimes new ideas would be introduced, sometimes a continuation of the session's activity would be suggested. It must be admitted, however, that little enthusiasm could be raised from visitor or parents about continuing the types of activity through to other times in the week on the parents' initiative. Indeed, a good deal of difficulty was found in involving the mothers during the sessions, although when they were so involved the response was encouraging." (James, 1975: 29).

In these programs, as in our own, confounding variables, for example change of Parent Educator, change of age-group, change in approach to family social and economic problems, make it impossible to account satisfactorily for the differential results of the programs. Nevertheless, these comments are illuminating.

b) Focus on Parent

Some programs have attempted to change parent/child interaction patterns by focussing on parents only. Karnes (1969b) had such an objective: mothers were instructed at a centre in the uses of toys and materials, as well as being involved in group discussion. Dramatic gains were recorded for their children. But results, on the point at issue, are clouded by the fact that staff members visited the homes at least monthly "to reinforce the teaching principles introduced at the meeting and to help each mother establish a working relationship with her baby." (Karnes, 1969b: 251).

It is clear that in this program of Karnes, as in the later one discussed in the previous section, the focus, at least for part of the time was on the mother/child dyad.

The Norwich Feasibility Study (Nicholls, 1974) built on the interest shown by parents in their children's language development to establish a network of trained teachers who made individual monthly evening visits to parents. Since the child was not present, the format of the visits was one of discussion only:

> ".....the Norwich Counsellors work with parents and not directly with the child at all. Secondly the Counsellors do not work to a prescribed programme with such things as 'how to use toys' etc. Their brief is an open-ended one - to seek opportunities, through discussion, to remind parents that the mind as well as the body of their child needs special care. The Counsellors look for opportunities, arising from discussion, to direct attention towards the kinds of learning the child can be seen to be successfully accomplishing in response to the daily routines and setting of the home." (Nicholls, 1974: 1).

It may be argued that the elements seen by Bronfenbrenner as necessary to the child's development, "interaction between mother and child around a common activity" (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 28) were very much a focus of the Norwich program: such common activities as the rituals and routines of bathing, feeding, dressing, bedtime, and the opportunities these present for language development. But these activities were discussed rather than experienced by parent and counsellor.

The Norwich approach has been reported as being warmly received by parents over a sustained period. The further question of interest is whether discussions alone can activate - at a remove - meaningful changes in parental behaviour.

5. SETTING OF PROGRAM: HOME OR CENTRE

The home is not the only possible setting for parent/child programs. They may, for example, be operated at a pre-school.

Planned visits by mothers to the pre-school were one component of Matthews' (1973) home-preschool liaison program. While small groups of mothers observed their children at work and play, the liaison teacher was able to explain the purpose of methods and materials being used by the director.

The West Riding EPA pre-school programs (Smith, 1975) included 'controlled learning' sessions in which an individual adult working with a child aimed to help him see the relevance of what he already knew to a new situation and thus extend his understanding. In these activities, parents and other helpers were closely involved:

> ".....various methods were tried of involving parents in the individual work. One vital element in 'parental involvement' is the parent's understanding of how children behave and how they learn. The individual work offered an opportunity for parents to be present at, and take charge of, a controlled learning situation with their child. If the mother was present in the group, she was used to reinforce the child's individual experience in the same way as the group teacher; or she was asked to 'sit in' at the individual session and sometimes asked to take over. Parents who were present when the child made an exciting discovery could become as excited as the child. Here it is possible that the individual work may act as a 'primer' not only for the group work but also for what happens at home." (Smith, 1975: 106).

The following year, parent participation had increased still further:

> " Parents were encouraged not to solve problems for children but to put the child in a position where he could solve them for himself. By the end of the year several parents were able to develop a learning situation by themselves." (Smith, 1975: 124).

Implicit in this account is the impressive, and rare, ability of the program to generate the kind of three-way relationships - involving pre-school teacher, parent and child - which can encourage the parent to try out for herself interactions which she has just seen modelled by the teacher. It is just this process of modelling followed by actual putting into practice of new behaviour which, we have maintained, can lead to widened perceptions on the part of parents. The West Riding experience suggests that it is possible to achieve this at a pre-school centre. But it would seem, especially with mothers who are diffident about patronising such centres, that the home setting is more likely to lead to change for a number of reasons:

i) The mother is more secure and at ease, since she is on her own "nome ground".

ii) The model can discuss with the mother not only her own (the model's) behaviours with the child but also the child's reactions to these behaviours.

iii) The mother can participate, after observation, in actual interactions with the child, opening up the possibility of her greater learning, and her enjoyment of her child's success and her role in his achievement.

iv) The mother is free to determine what types of interaction suit her personal style and her life circumstances.

v) The mother is more likely to perceive opportunities for her child to practise desired skills in the daily round of life.

There are vast differences between home and pre-school in terms of materials available, space, child reactions and diversity of demands upon the participating adults. It is, in many cases, asking too much to expect the mother, after observation in a pre-school, to evolve ways of working in the distinctly different situation of her home.

Mothers' group meetings, held in a centre, do have advantages, as Karnes, Salt and Hubbard (1974) and others, including ourselves, have been quick to recognise. Bronfenbrenner has written of the motivational benefits of "having the mothers meet in a group which could provide mutual reinforcement and a source of security." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 30).

It is of interest to note that in a number of programs (Harrison, 1975; Home Link, 1974), group meetings were established by 'spontaneous generation', the mothers themselves taking the initiative and asking to meet once home visits had become accepted.

In the program we have described, the Aboriginal mothers who experienced both individual home visits and group meetings in a centre appeared to derive useful and complementary benefits from the two settings.

6. ROLE AND TRAINING OF PARENT EDUCATORS

A number of the programs we have mentioned, including our own, exemplify the shoals on which it is only too easy for the Parent Educator to run aground as she steers a difficult and narrow course between twin hazards: on the one hand over-involvement with the child as she serves

as a role model in a variety of activities; on the other, failure to alert the mother to the many possibilities of her educative role.

Above all, she must not rob the mother of the feeling of primary responsibility; if, as is likely to be the case, the mother is already robbed of such a feeling, she must promote it. Bronfenbrenner's injunction should be heeded by every home visitor:

> " Intervention programs which cast the parent in a subordinate role or have the effect of discouraging or decreasing his participation in activities with the child are likely to be counter-productive." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 56).

The Parent Educator's role, though difficult, is not impossible. The home visitor in the West Riding Project did not find the task insuperable:

> " The relationship with the parents, and particularly the mother, was of prime importance.... Since the most important person involved in teaching the child is the mother, the visitor must always remember that she *is* a visitor in the mother's home and not try to exercise any authority. Since the mother and the visitor are observing the child on an equal basis they are more like peers than teacher and pupil." (Smith, 1975: 144)

At the conclusion of our project also, it appeared that mothers were moving toward much more active assumption of the teaching role and Parent Educators were having greater success, and were more at ease, in promoting this movement.

When mothers are involved who are lacking in confidence and any perception of their educative role - a virtual sine qua non of such programs at their commencement - a period of something approaching parent apprenticeship may be almost inevitable. The way out of the Parent Educator's dilemma may be realistically to accept this while she and the parents alike are feeling their way to new roles. This is not to adopt a view of parent education programs which would envisage parents as subsidiaries, assistants, means to an end not determined by themselves. It means that Parent Educators keep in mind always the primacy of the parent, but accept that the process of helping the parent also to become aware of that primacy may take some time. We have already suggested that this is one reason for ensuring that programs are sufficiently sustained.

Some of the Parent Educators in the programs we have examined were highly qualified teachers; some had not completed primary school.

The case for having qualified teachers as Parent Educators has been put by the Norwich project (Nicholls, 1974) in terms of parents' respect for such teachers' expertise. On the other hand, there are cogent arguments, summarised earlier, for employing members of the local community. Programs which have called on their services (Gordon, 1975; Staines, 1974; Harrison, 1975) report no discernible consumer resistance; indeed their reception appears to have been enthusiasti: The further question is, however, whether such members of the local community can fulfil program aims as effectively as trained specialists?

To date, results on this score have been encouraging. We have reported some early diffidence on the part of Parent Educators in moving into the complex interactions demanded by their role, while Gordon (1975) has reported early authoritarianism. Both these transient disadvantages may have been offset by the very lack of professional training: since parents are less likely to defer to the Parent Educators than to the presumed expertise of a qualified teacher, they are thus less likely to abdicate their own responsibility.

The strengthening of home/school relations is an aim of many of the programs we have considered. Parent Educators who are qualified teachers should be in a position to further this aim. Is it possible to equip unqualified Parent Educators so that they too may be effective in this area, or is it likely that the history of school failure and mistrust which many of them share with the mothers they are visiting will undercut whatever measures are attempted?

On this question, it was our experience that through teacher-parent contact mediated by sensitive program organisation, a start may be made in building more positive relationships on both sides. In Liverpool, similarly, successful Home Link visits by the trainee Parent Educators were made to schools and discussions with teachers held both at the schools and at the course centre (Home Link, 1974).

Further to the issue of qualification, it should be remembered that no program, among those we have considered, envisages employing *untrained* people. Programs involving unqualified paraprofessionals have all provided relevant training courses. Home Link's training program, for example, covered child development, with emphasis on language and play, the importance of parental attitudes, especially encouragement, contact with community agencies, and practical experience in home visiting. Through such training courses a valuable pool of experience is accumulating from which future programs may draw.

Perhaps the greatest safeguard in the utilization of lay (though not as we have seen, untrained) home visitors lies in their partnership (in the programs we have considered) with trained specialists. It could be that this situation may change in the future as the Parent Educators acquire even greater expertise and confidence. Poulton sees the possibility of future autonomy in Liverpool, where "the mothers involved may wish to develop their own control of the scheme" (Poulton, 1975: 7). The strong pressures within some Aboriginal groups for greater powers of decision-making suggest the urgency of equipping more Aboriginal members of the community with the training and confidence to fulfil this role.

7. SCOPE OF PROGRAM

All the programs that we have examined have had an educational objective. With some (Levenstein, 1970; Karnes, 1969), the objective was highly specific; with others, such as our own, the charter has been more diffuse. Furthermore, the educational objective has been more readily implemented with some families than with others.

Karnes (1969a), working with highly disadvantaged mothers, found that where the mothers were working full-time, their children's scores uniformly fell below those of the children whose mothers were not in this situation; similarly the former mothers' attendances and ratings on mother/child interaction were correspondingly lower.

Karnes comments:

> " It seems fair to conclude that, in spite of verbal support of the program, the six mothers who were fully employed did not have time or energy to implement program goals." (Karnes, 1969a: 260).

Bronfenbrenner has written of the situation in which the most disadvantaged families live:

> " The conditions of life are such that the family cannot perform its childrearing functions even though it may wish to do so. Under these circumstances no direct form of intervention aimed at enhancing the child's development or his parents' child-rearing skills is likely to have much impact." (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 48).

Our program has similarly underscored the problem of trying to focus a mother's attention on her educative role in a family situation so stressful that, as one of the Parent Educators remarked, "She didn't know if she was coming or going."

Scott also found in her work with Aboriginal children and their parents that the key issues affecting participation were family stability and freedom from multiple problems of family survival:

> " Attendance figures....show....that most families are interested to (involve themselves actively in a regular pre-school education program) during periods when family circumstances allow." (Scott and Derbyshire, 1974: 185).

There may well be a threshold of parental energy, different for each individual, below which ecological intervention can alone bring amelioration. Even above this threshold, choices may still need to be made concerning the scope of parent/child programs. Trying to confine these to educational issues may be quite unreasonable.

In the first home visiting program in the West Riding it was felt that the social and economic problems of the families were central to their lives and could not be ignored, indeed were a proper focus for the visitor:

> " In a programme to promote the development of young children, it is impossible to neglect this aspect of family life. For it is such economic and social factors which influence the relationships within the home - between mother and child. A programme which ignores these problems, and concentrates on strictly educational activities, will have little long term effect." (Smith, 1975: 157).

In the later program, however, such problems were seen as inevitable but unfortunate distractions:

> " There is a tendency.....for the visited family to treat the visitor as confidante and informal social worker. None of these difficulties can be completely overcome; indeed it would be uncooperative to ignore the families' social problems, and the opportunity for the visitor to act as a front line for the professional social worker could be missed. The visitor's strategies for keeping these distractions to a minimum will depend upon personality and the nature of the difficulty, but an important initial strategy is to make the educational emphasis of the programme obvious from the start and to show that the parent's participation is an essential element." (James, 1975: 21).

The dilemma is that it is precisely the parent's participation which is likely to be the casualty if the visitor insists on 'keeping these distractions to a minimum'.

Parental participation did diminish in this program when compared with the earlier program, though, as has been noted earlier, it is difficult to assign a particular cause among a multiplicity of possible causes.

These West Riding programs operated, for the most part, with stable families who "had the energy, and were free enough from other more immediate and pressing problems to be drawn closely into educational projects and reinforce progress made by their children" (Smith, 1975: 259). But even in that stable and homogeneous area, the situation could quickly change, as was demonstrated in the 1972 national coal strike which affected every family in the town. A home visiting program needs to be responsive to such family pressures.

Both Home Link and Home-Start have kept the educational objective always in mind; they have, however, not regarded multiple family pressures as distractions to be minimised but as part of the total family situation on which it may be possible, however slowly and little by little, to build:

> " By working with a parent in her own home, the H.S.V.s (Home-Start Volunteers) are able to look at the problems where they exist, and build on what the mother has got. Many mothers feel defeated and hopeless, inadequate and helpless. In some instances it is evidently the H.S.V.'s enthusiasm for the task, the children, the mother and even the home itself, combined

> with her confidence and optimism that something *can* be done, which transmits itself and begins to encourage the first hint of hope. She can reinforce the importance of the mother and even the adequacy of the home, pointing out how it can become interesting and stimulating to the children and how the mother can make the best use of the space and equipment available." (Harrison, 1974c: 6).

The lesson for other home visiting programs may be that the educational emphasis is necessary but for some groups, those subject to particular stress, not sufficient. For such groups a program such as Home-Start has particular strengths, utilizing as it does volunteer visitors who have a small case-load, allowing more concentrated supportive visits in times of crisis, and independent of "the authorities", though with ready access to them.

Support for this view comes from a recent study by van der Eyken (1975) of the reasons why some mothers do not use playgrounds even when these are available. From the responses of one group of mothers, indicating feelings of alienation and helplessness, van der Eyken characterises these women as having an immature relationship with their children whom they need at home to give them a role identity. He makes this recommendation:

> ".....that Home Visitors should be used to supplement Play-groups. These visitors would not be accepted if they appeared to be sent by officialdom, in the sense that Health Visitors are. Their sympathy must be with the mother, and they should be prepared to offer her support, in any way, not just by preparing play materials, and showing her how to use them, but with the aim of strengthening her as a person." (Tizard, 1974: 38).

CHAPTER 8

REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. VIABILITY OF HOME-BASED PROGRAMS WITH URBAN ABORIGINALS

Educational action-research programs with Aboriginal populations have been, in the main, school-based (including pre-schools).

The research reported here has demonstrated that it is possible to develop parent education programs and to implement them with urban Aboriginal families in such a way that the mothers find satisfaction in their participation (the sources of satisfaction are highly variable within the group). The project, with its admitted limitations in design, seems to have some favourable outcomes with a significant number of the project mothers.

In reporting any intervention program, one clearly needs to be cautious about attributing any changes in the participants to the program itself. At the time of the initial observation of the mother's interaction with the child in a teaching situation, environmental variables exerted a press on both mother and child as they interacted. From their interaction came new learnings. Mother and child also acquired new learnings independently of each other by acting on and through the environment. These new learnings were incorporated by both mother and child into their repertoire for further interaction.

When the mother's teaching behaviour was again observed, after the operation of the intervention program, changes in the interaction should have been attributable to the introduction to the mother-child system of the new variable, the intervention program, provided the original environmental variables had remained relatively constant.

It is true that other changes occurred in the pre-program - post-program interval; for example, the child became older and presumably more competent. There may have been changes too, not attributable to the program, in the mothers. Certainly the mothers, during the interval, came to know

the Senior Parent Educator well and this may have influenced their behaviour in the recorded teaching sessions at the conclusion of the project. However, in view of the specific maternal teaching behaviours analysed (enunciation for the child of the principle underlying the task, the extent of verbal guidance and the use of verbal praise and encouragement), it seems reasonable to attribute the changes that did occur to the program itself.

Few changes were demonstrated in the children and in presenting the results several reasons were postulated as probable explanations.

i) Programs which aim to help the mother redefine her role vis-a-vis her child might need to be in operation for a lengthy period of time before changes in the child are evident. Badger's program (1971) has exemplified this need.

ii) The age of the child at the institution of such a program is, as indicated in the research review, probably a significant variable affecting change; the younger the child, the greater the likelihood of change.

iii) Participation of a child in a program of this type may lead to changes in both personality factors and cognitive functioning not captured by intelligence test performance. Hertzig and Birch (1971), in their longitudinal study of measured intelligence, suggest that for disadvantaged children I.Q. level is already well established by age three and tends to remain stable thereafter. They suggest, accordingly, that the impact of pre-school programs should be assessed by more sensitive measures than overall I.Q. They point out, cogently,

> " Obviously even when I.Q. remains stable, school attainment may be significantly modified and children of the same I.Q. may either function as failures or achievers in school situations." (Hertzig and Birch, 1971: 425).

In general, as the results achieved in the project are considered, it is important to remember that it is unrealistic to imagine that a given approach will be positive for all families or that it will be equally effective for all groups. In regard to the former point, obviously a parent education program can not be implemented readily in homes where

the primary caretaker is in steady employment*. In other cases, some parents will find such a program, however sensitively conceived and implemented, unappealing, and yet others will be so pressed by life circumstances that it is unlikely that they can organize their lives to interact meaningfully with their children to promote desired behaviours.

With regard to effectiveness, outcomes are obviously dependent not only on the program and those who implement it but also upon the entering characteristics of the parents and children. Herzog et al (1972) found that, even within a 'poverty' group, differences in socio-economic status appear to influence the response to a program of pre-school enrichment; the children who appeared to gain most were those of 'relatively high' socio-economic status and relatively low I.Q. In our project, there was a tendency towards greater gain among children of low ability from stable homes. In the case of the mothers, the most responsive (in terms of changes of teaching behaviour) were those who were initially the 'poorer' teachers and who also came from unstable family units.

Much further research is required to determine the types of program which have most to offer to families with differing characteristics.

2. PARENT EDUCATION AND THE WIDER SOCIAL SETTING: PRIORITIES IN CHANGE

Obviously, education cannot by itself, in whatever form it is conceived and whatever its manner of delivery of its services, ensure equality of opportunity, equality of access, or freedom of choice to families who are rendered vulnerable by their life circumstances. Broad social programs are required concurrently with educational reforms.

The Commission of Enquiry into Poverty sums up the present situation:

> " Reasons for this failure of the education system to meet the needs of both Aboriginal children and adults are manifold. It is clear that their position in the total society will affect the outcomes of education: they are the poorest, worst housed section of the community with the highest mortality and morbidity

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* A smaller proportion of Aboriginal than of non-Aboriginal women is reported to be in the workforce; the 1971 census shows 23.6% of Aboriginal women to be in employment compared with 37.1% of total Australian women (aged 15 and over).

> rates. Because of their poverty, powerlessness and cultural differences, white attitudes towards them have always been unfavourable, and expectations, whether by teachers or the community in general, are low". (Fitzgerald, 1976: 222-3).

Is successful intervention in the total socio-cultural situation of a group of people in fact possible at the one point in time? Are some areas of need more urgent than others? There are various answers to this question.

Grey, for example, in his work in developing the Aboriginal Family Education Centres, reports on the issues of basic survival facing the group - work, health, lack of land, lack of a voice. He suggests the following priority:

> " There is a fundamental and developmental order which, for Aborigines who are still faced with survival, places ownership of land and an effective voice equal first with education - continuing life-long education; third in the sequence is job skills for employment; fourth, housing and finally, fifth, health." (Grey, 1974: 381)

It seems difficult to defend any ordering of priorities. On purely empirical grounds, is health a less urgent issue than employment or education? The issues are all so interdependent that programs of amelioration in a given area cannot be fully effective unless attended by constructive action in the related areas that determine social functioning and individual mental health. Therefore, governments and communities must find some way of establishing for minority groups social justice and equity.

But the members of the minority group must themselves help guide policy determinations that affect them. This means that they must be encouraged to articulate their needs and wishes and to take action.

If this can be achieved so that they feel they are, in fact, and in the eyes of the majority culture, responsible people able to determine their own fate, their consequent feelings of self-determination could be expected to lead to changes in their interactions with their own children and so to a more developmental environment for these children. Scheinfeld is one who emphasizes the need for changes in the life situation of people

before they can help their children to relate effectively to the world:

> " Parents cannot construe the child's relationship to the world in ways that are fundamentally different from the way they construe their own relationship to the world. Hence, to change child-rearing practices effectively, one must change the parents' own experience in the world." (Scheinfeld, 1969: 2).

His view is shared on the Australian scene by Scott. She maintains that educational assistance to parents themselves must precede attempts to direct their attention to children's needs and interests:

> " With a view, then, to helping parents arrive at a position from which they can make home conditions more likely to sustain educational effort, this project suggests a change of objectives in work with parents. Rather than focusing on the acquisition of knowledge and techniques directly concerned with child-rearing, one might need to be concerned with how to help parents to extend their own cognitive skills and general knowledge to the point where they can deal, with less strain, with the usual parental responsibilities. In this way, parents may also experience the meaning of education for a person's life - in the sense that they can act in the present with more awareness, knowledge and understanding of the consequences for themselves and others.
>
> The whole idea of causal relationships, and the possibility of influencing events to some degree appears to be outside the experience of some families. If conditions needed for adult learning (as previously discussed) are present, help can be given with thinking - with reflecting on and learning from personal experience; with obtaining information and using resources relevant to some immediate goal; with anticipating possible results and seeking evidence of actual results; with relating the appropriate pieces of events. These, and other cognitive skills are necessary assets in situations requiring one to take individual responsibilities.
>
> Once a degree of control is established, it is much more realistic - but likely to be much less necessary - to direct attention to children's needs and interests. Home conditions helpful to children's development are more likely to exist automatically, and parents will be in a better position to stimulate, spontaneously, similar cognitive skills in children." (Scott, 1974: 236).

In relation to the point made by Scheinfeld and Scott, one might, while seeing the logic of their point of view, legitimately question the focus of initial change. Might it not be that it is in some ways, as an initial undertaking, easier to help a mother recognize and extend her competence in child-rearing than to help her to extend her own cognitive skills? An additional point in favour of the former approach is that

the offer to help a mother to help her child may be perceived by her as less threatening than an offer to help her help herself. It has certainly seemed to us relatively easy to achieve the former goal.

The end-point, of course, is not parental competence in child-rearing, but such competence may well be a first step towards arousing in the mother a desire to extend her competence in and control over other areas of her life. Grotberg would seem to endorse the possibility of this happening:

> " There are constraints and limitations on what can be accomplished in working directly and solely with families themselves. These families are part of a larger social and cultural milieu and cannot help but be influenced by the larger context. It is possible, however, that changes brought about within the family, if they can be effected despite conflicting pressures, may in the long run produce changes in the social and cultural environment." (Grotberg, 1969).

Is there evidence to support this belief that a planned, new experience in the life of a parent can act as a catalyst and trigger off more fundamental changes in parental and family behaviour?

Some overseas research programs have shown that, after participating in programs where they were called upon to play an integral part in the child's education, some at least of the mothers took action to improve their educational and occupational status (Miller, 1968; Karnes, 1969). Some showed a change of life style from hopelessness and helplessness and became determined to change their lives and the lives of their children; nine of the fifteen mothers in this project went on to become leaders in community affairs (Badger, 1971).

The program described in this report has shown that Aboriginal mothers can, themselves, become effective parent educators working with other mothers. This not only leads to changes in their own patterns of functioning but also makes them visible to their neighbours as successful professionals. Perhaps in this way they offer proof to the Aboriginal women with whom they work that change is possible and that they themselves too have a respected place to occupy in the society.

3. PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

There should be a wide range of options in early childhood services available to families. Like Bronfenbrenner, we believe that home-based programs, with a central focus on the parent-child system, should be included in the options. We believe that many Aboriginal parents, after involvement in such a program, would seek to utilize other forms of early childhood services as their children approached school starting age.

It seems to us, moreover, highly probable that Aboriginal families who have participated in a home-based program and then utilized community early childhood services (catering for mixed or single ethnic groups according to their choice) are likely to have found a source of satisfaction in their increased range of interactions with their children. Following the school enrolment of their children, they are likely to continue their informed interest in their children's progress, to be surer of their responsibilities and roles, and to be conscious of the ways in which they and the school must complement each other in providing optimal stimulus to the children's development. Thus not only will they be likely to exercise their own parenting responsibilities, but they will be likely also to initiate interaction with the school to ensure that it, too, plays its proper role.

It is not suggested that such parent education programs are a universal panacea; it is suggested that they are a viable and effective form of family support appropriate for certain families.

It is further suggested that innovations in school practices are urgently required. Bloom (1976: 1) has shown that:

> " Most students can learn what the schools have to teach - if the problem is approached sensitively and systematically."

This systematic and sensitive approach needs, in his view, to take account of each student's cognitive entry behaviours and his affective entry characteristics; furthermore, the teacher must use appropriate instruction: that is, he must provide appropriate cues to the learner, he must ensure the participation of the learner in the activity and provide to each child appropriate reinforcement and feedback.

It would seem that many Australian schools are a long way from achieving a quality of instruction such as that described by Bloom. And, even if the teachers of Aboriginal children were to approach the children "sensitively and systematically", as defined by Bloom, there would still be a strong argument for the support of parental involvement. Hunt has urged throughout this last decade, the central purpose of parent education and support:

> : Such education may....take the form of a deliberate effort to help parents learn how to arrange circumstances for their young children the better to foster from birth on the sensori-motor, attitudinal and linguistic bases for the abilities, the attitudes, the motives, and the values which must be acquired later if the child is to become able to cope with school and later to participate in the mainstream of our increasingly technological society." (Hunt, 1969: viii).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In the light of evidence from the Brisbane project, the conclusions reached by careful evaluators such as Bloom and Bronfenbrenner, and recognition of the critical role of parents in developing the cognitive characteristics and motivational orientations of children, *it is recommended that programs of parent education be instituted in a number of pilot projects and sustained over a period of some years.*

   These pilot projects, with careful control of relevant variables (particularly mother's style of teaching, stability of the family unit and child's level of cognitive functioning) would enable a thorough testing of the assumptions underlying the Brisbane project. Evaluation should encompass the wide range of behaviours and characteristics that may be affected by this type of program. We would recommend, further, that such programs be implemented with mother/child early in the child's life.

2. *It is recommended that Aboriginal mothers be trained and used as parent educators in parent education programs for Aboriginals.*

   In the initial stages of their operations, it seems they would need support and guidance from a more highly trained Parent Educator. The experience in the Brisbane project suggests that they need to be helped in their professional development by regular on-the-job diagnostic

evaluation of their practices, supplemented by regular off-the-job discussions of principles underlying the practices. This type of assistance should help them reach the stage where they can function effectively and creatively, making full use of their intimate knowledge of the mothers who, of the same ethnic group as themselves, have many life experiences similar to their own. This could lead to the development of a cohort of parent educators.

3. Throughout the research project, we addressed ourselves to urban Aboriginal families. We believe, however, that the approach we have tried is likely to be fruitful with some rural, as well as with some urban Aboriginal families and with some members of other groups who function as minority groups within the total Australian community. *It is recommended that our proposals be examined in the light of their probable appropriateness for and effectiveness with other groups; if they seem appropriate, pilot projects with such groups should be instituted and evaluated.*

4. *It is recommended that there be exploration of all possible means of helping Aboriginal parents -*
   i) to become informed about school policies and programs,
   ii) to become informed about the roles they need to play to assure the educational progress of their children, and
   iii) to participate in decision making about the education of their children.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate: education has not been responsive to the needs of the Aboriginal community. Nor is it likely to become responsive, a wide body of research evidence would indicate, unless and until the efforts of the school are guided by and reinforced by the Aboriginal parents.

From the earliest times, schools and school people have concentrated on the Aboriginal children and excluded their parents from meaningful involvement; as a result many of these parents have come to

believe that they have no role at all to play in the education of their children. Most see no connection between the activities of the home and parent - child interactions, on the one hand, and school success on the other.

We can excuse policy makers of an earlier day for their sole concentration on children. Recognition of the complementarity of home and school in fostering the academic progress of children and recognition of the rights of parents in relation to the education of their children are relatively recent developments. Earlier policy makers, then, acted in accord with the best knowledge available to them. They were relatively ignorant of the complexity of the interacting forces shaping school achievement.

Current policy makers do not have this excuse of ignorance; as Bloom would phrase it, they have 'lost their innocence'. Bloom writes:

> " These advances in our understanding of education and related phenomena have not always been reflected in our educational practices. I am convinced that little will be done until the meaning and consequences of these new advances are understood by educational scholars, educational leaders, and teachers. I have suggested that these new insights and understandings may be conceived of as the loss of *innocence* about the relations among educational phenomena. This way of posing the problem suggests that the burden of responsibility for appropriate actions and practices rests with the professionals in the field once new ideas are adequately communicated. But long experience in education has left me with the impression that innocence is not easily relinquished and new responsibilities are avoided as long as possible." (Bloom, 1972: 349)

Will Australian educators and policy makers relinquish their innocence and assume the new responsibilities, especially those which recognize the critical roles of parents? Unless they do, what hopes may we reasonably have that education in the future will be more successful than in the past in discharging its responsibilities to its Aboriginal clientele?

APPENDIX I

A TYPICAL TEACHING SESSION - YEAR I - MOTHER, FIVE-YEAR OLD CHILD AND SENIOR PARENT EDUCATOR

1. *DIVISION* with rods -

Parent Educator shows mother how, for example, tan rod can be "cut" into 2 pink rods, and mother then sets child further division problems.

Follow-up activities suggested by Parent Educator and/or mother - more practice with rods. "And what do we have around the house that we often divide?" - Apples, oranges, packet of biscuits, cake. Suggestion that child be asked to divide an apple into half, quarters. Recipe given for Playdough, and baking set including cutters left as part of library borrowing, so child can measure and divide various quantities of dough.

2. *WORD RECOGNITION AND MATCHING* through game of "Up the Garden Path." A set of say 8 words (for example, mother, dog, sits, etc.) is shuffled and dealt, to be matched with the same words, each occupying one marked square on a cardboard "path". There are 2 sets of words and 2 paths - the game is to see who first can go right up the "garden path", reading each word aloud as it is dealt. (Earlier in the year this game will have been played with pictures). First Parent Educator shows child how to play the game, then child and mother play. This game can easily be made at home by mother and child.

Follow-up activities. In what other ways can mother encourage child to practise the words he knows? Mother may suggest that he picks out words in the paper or on the cornflakes packet at breakfast. One mother suggests a scrapbook - child can paste in pictures and she can write labels for them which he can copy. (This mother asked whether the Parent Educator would look at scrapbook on subsequent visits and suggested encouraging child with a merit stamp!) "Animal Grab" or "Donkey" may be borrowed from the Program Library and the rule stressed that the child should read the printed name of the animal as he matches it with its pair.

3. *RE-TELLING A STORY.* The Parent Educator has taped a fairly familiar story, for example, "Goldilocks", which is played, then re-told by child. His version is taped and re-played to the delight of all. Hearing one's own voice always adds enormous fun to such an exercise.

   Follow-up activities. The importance of being able to *remember* what one has heard and tell about it is stressed to the mother. In what ways can she get child to do this around the house? A game played on a previous session may be recalled: "I went to the shop and I bought...." with each participant adding an item to the shopping list, and having to remember the cumulative total. Giving the child directions (say two at once), and seeing if he can remember them, may be suggested. Or mother might suggest reading a story from the library, and seeing if the child can remember it, or a part of it.

4. *READING A STORY.* The Parent Educator may demonstrate how mother might get the child to remember what happened on the previous page, or in a picture which the reader and child have looked at and talked about. The point is made that even 5 minutes reading a day is tremendously valuable, but that it should always be fun, not a chore.

5. A book and a game are finally selected by mother and child from the Program Library, to be exchanged at the next Home Teaching visit.

A TYPICAL TEACHING SESSION - YEAR II - MOTHER, PRE-SCHOOL CHILD AND PARENT EDUCATOR

In the teaching session described below, the Parent Educators had devised ways of capitalizing on the local interest in the Brisbane Exhibition, which was about to take place.

1. *SAMPLE BAGS.* A counting game in which a number of miniature paper bags are made, each holding one item, say a balloon costing 5 cents (5 dots are inked on the bag), a Freddo Frog costing 3 cents (3 dots),

a jelly-baby costing 1 cent (1 dot). Child has to 'pay' the right number of cents to the 'Show man' (Parent Educator or mother) to receive his sample bag. The roles are then reversed.

Follow-up activities. Child and mother can make other 'sample bags' for other items at home; at the Exhibition and when shopping the child can help pay for small items and count the change.

2. *GRAND PARADE.* A counting, vocabulary-building and memory game. Some 6 or 7 plastic animals are placed in a circle on the table: they are in the Grand Parade. Child hides his eyes, one (or more) animals are removed, and he must try to remember which they were and count how many are left. Then he can be the one to remove the animals, and the others must remember.

Follow-up activities. Talking about the animals at the Exhibition, and later trying to remember all the different kinds seen.

3. *LOUDSPEAKER.* A game to develop descriptive power, vocabulary and confidence. An effective if simple loudspeaker is made from a rolled-up sheet of paper, and Parent Educator, mother and child take turns in pretending to be the policeman announcing and describing a missing person.

Follow-up activities. Said one Parent Educator: "The mother can follow this up by losing her child at the Exhibition."

4. *READING A STORY* and *CHANGING LIBRARY MATERIALS* as in Year I, complete the teaching session.

APPENDIX II

FINAL EVALUATIONS OF PARENT EDUCATORS BY SENIOR PARENT EDUCATOR

Parent Educator	Family	Date	1. *Warmth towards child*			
			Marked warmth	Some warmth or at times	Little or infrequent warmth	Marked lack of warmth
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73		x		
*P.E.1	Family 2	10.73	x			
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			

* Atypical - mother absent: 12 year old daughter stood in.

			2. *Ability to engage child's participation*			
			Child highly engaged	Child fairly engaged or at times	Child rarely or only spasmodically engaged	Child totally unengaged
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73	x(though shy)			
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73	x			
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73			x(attentive but mostly not participating)	
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			

APPENDIX II (contd)

Parent Educator	Family	Date	3. *Ability to present activity to child in comprehensible steps*			
			Activity very clearly presented	Activity fairly clearly presented	Activity presented in rather disorganised way	Activity presented in very disorganised way
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73	x			
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73	x			
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 6	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			
			4. *Degree of verbal interaction with child*			
			Much verbal interaction with child	Some verbal interaction with child	Little verbal interaction with child	Very little verbal interaction with child
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73	x			
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73			x(tried but child too shy to respond)	
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			

APPENDIX II (contd)

Parent Educator	Family	Date	5. *Use of encouragement*			
			Tone very encouraging	Fairly encouraging	Rather discouraging	Very discouraging
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73			x	
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73	x			
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			
			6. *Creativity and relevance in presentation of activities*			
			Many creative relevant ways of presenting activities	Some creative or relevant ways of presenting activities	Few creative or relevant ways of presenting activities	No creative or relevant ways of presenting activities
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73			x	
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73			x	
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73			x	
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73			x	
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73			x	
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73			x	
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73			x	
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73			x	

APPENDIX II (contd)

THE PARENT EDUCATOR AND THE MOTHER

Parent Educator	Mother	Date	1. *Ability to relate to mother*			
			Marked warmth	Some warmth or at times	Little or infrequent warmth	Marked lack of warmth
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			
			2. *Ability to bring out principles and value of activities*			
			Principles underlying all activities brought out	Principles brought out sometimes	Principles brought out infrequently	Principles not brought out
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73				x
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73				x
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73			x	
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73			x	
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73			x	
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73		x		

APPENDIX II (contd)

Parent Educator	Mother	Date	3. *Ability to involve mother in teaching activity*			
			Mother closely involved	Mother involved at times	Mother involved infrequently	Mother not involved
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 4	10.73			x	
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			
			4. *Ability to withdraw from dominant role & encourage mother's leadership*			
			Highly encouraging of mother's leadership	Sometimes encouraging of mother's leadership	Seldom encouraging of mother's leadership	Not encouraging of mother's leadership
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			

APPENDIX II (contd)

Parent Educator	Mother	Date	5. *Ability to promote verbal interaction between mother and child*			
			Promoted much verbal interaction between mother & child	Promoted some verbal interaction between mother & child	Promoted little verbal interaction between mother & child	Promoted no verbal interaction between mother & child
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73		x		
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73			x(tried but child shy)	
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73		x		
			6. *Promotion of mother's use of encouragement*			
			Marked promotion of mother's use of encouragement	Some promotion of mother's use of encouragement	Little promotion of mother's use of encouragement	Did not promote mother's use of encouragement
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73				x
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73				x
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73				x(Mother very encouraging anyway)
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73				x
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73				x
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			

APPENDIX II (contd)

Parent Educator	Mother	Date	7. *Ability to convey to mother the importance of her teaching role*			
			Laid much stress on importance of mother's teaching role	Laid some stress of importance of mother's teaching role	Laid little stresss on importance of mother's teaching role	Laid no stress on importance of mother's teaching role
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73				x
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73				x
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73			x	
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	x			
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	x			
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	x			
			8. *Follow-up of previous activities*			
			Followed up many activities	Followed up some activities	Followed up few activities	Followed up no activities
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73			x	
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73				x
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73			x(seldom seen mother lately)	
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73		x		

APPENDIX II (contd)

Parent Educator	Mother	Date	9. *Ability to suggest or elicit follow-up ideas*			
			Suggested or elicited many follow-up ideas	Suggested or elicited some follow-up ideas	Suggested or elicited few follow-up ideas	Suggested or elicited no follow-up ideas
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73		x		x
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73			x	
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73			x	
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73		x		
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73		x		
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73		x		

Parent Educator	Mother	Date	1. *Feelings of lightness and enjoyment*
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73	Heavy going until near end - finger plays were enjoyed by all. Child's shyness caused feeling of tension.
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73	Very jolly.
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73	Gay; much laughing and enjoyment by all participants.
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73	Because of child's shyness, heavy going till near end, though P.E.2 remained smiling and jolly.
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	Obvious feeling of enjoyment (though also some tenseness because of child's unpredictability). Mother obviously felt support from visit.
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	Tremendous enjoyment by all participants (including other children).
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	All participants enjoyed visit, though P.E.3 sounded a bit harsh at times. However, neither mother nor child was put off. Their infectious laugh helped relaxation.
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	Warm, gay atmosphere.

Parent Educator	Mother	Date	2. *Pace and interest of presentation*
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73	Pretty slow till finger plays at end. Long hiatuses while P.E.1 asked questions which the child wouldn't answer.
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73	Good, fast-moving.
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73	P.E.1 kept program moving well.
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73	Slow. Too many pauses while P.E.2 and mother asked questions which child wouldn't answer.
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	Speedy, well judged timing by P.E.2 of child's limited concentration span - she handled well the difficult job of keeping his attention.
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	Brisk presentation and each activity well covered.
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	Interest well maintained. Child never bored.
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	Lively, good presentation.
			3. *Flexibility in dealing with unusual situations*
P.E.1	Family 1	10.73	P.E.1's recourse in face of child's shyness was at last to change activity; could, however, have discussed principles with mother.
P.E.1	Family 2	10.73	When mother had to go out, P.E.1 got big sister to stand in effectively.
P.E.1	Family 3	10.73	Baby distracted mother at times, P.E.1 kept on teaching - lost mother.
P.E.2	Family 4	10.73	P.E.2 unable to salvage too much from the difficult situation of child's intense shyness.
P.E.2	Family 5	10.73	Very flexible in capitalizing on whatever engaged child, even when this was not on program.
P.E.2	Family 6	10.73	P.E.2 was able to successfully involve 3 other children and see that target child, who is shy, got a fair go.
P.E.3	Family 7	10.73	Visitors arrived, P.E.3 maintained child's interest with non-crucial activity till mother's return.
P.E.3	Family 8	11.73	Mother out of home, but P.E.3 able to interact just as comfortably with father.

APPENDIX III

ANALYSIS OF MOTHER'S PERFORMANCE ON TEACHING TASK

(a) *CODING SCHEDULE*

1. *Types of instruction, information and questions: content-based utterances*

		Examples
1.1	Utterance focussing attention or directing placement, giving *specific* category or principle	You've got to put those into 4 piles. These are dots. Big or small?
1.2	Utterance focussing attention or directing placement, giving *general* category or principle	Put all the ones together that's the same. They've all got a mark on them. What size are they?
1.3	Utterance focussing attention or directing placement, giving *no* guiding category or principle	Put this one there. That doesn't go there. Where are you going to put them?
1.4	Task-irrelevant or misleading utterance focussing attention or directing placement	Look for the squares (where shape irrelevant). Which are the other red ones? (where colour irrelevant)
1.5	Utterance recalling relevant past experience	You know how you sort matchboxes in piles. What does Nana wear round her neck? (Cross)
1.6	Repeated utterance	(See Procedures)
1.7	Clarification	Put them into four groups - four heaps.
1.8	Request to verbalise reasons for placement.	Why are they in the same piles? Why did you put those together?

APPENDIX III (contd)

2. *Motivational Utterances*

		Examples
2.1	Exhortation to action	Come on. Go on. Keep going. Mummy'll give you a lolly. *I* can see it - can *you* see it?
2.2	Exhortation to look	Look. See?
2.3	Praise, encouragement and supportive noises	Mm. Yeah. Okay. Fine. Good girl. You've got it! That's right.
2.4	Negative remark followed by positive guidance	No, put that there. Hang on. Aren't you going to....? No, because....
2.5	Negative or critical remark followed by no positive guidance	No. (Followed by silence.) That's not right. (" ")

3. *Miscellaneous*

3.1	Abandoned utterance	Put them - The big -
3.2	Utterance ambiguous to coder	
3.3	Request to child to repeat (Mother had not heard)	What? Eh?
3.4	Utterance addressed to outside authority	What do I do now?
3.5	Repetition of interviewer's question	Interviewer: Can you ask why they're in those piles? Mother: Why are they in those piles?

APPENDIX III (contd)

(b) *CODING UNITS AND PROCEDURES*

Coding Units

To qualify as a unit, an utterance or utterances could either

1) refer to a single placement or focussing.
   e.g. They're big ones. Where do they all go?
   1.1

or 2) mark a change of category within one placement or focussing.
   e.g. No, that's not right. You have to put them there.
   2.4 1.3

Thus it was possible for one unit to be embedded in another:
e.g. Put all the dots together, that's the girl, all those ones with the dots.
   1.1 2.3

Time: Five seconds silence between utterances was taken as a (necessarily arbitrary) cut-off point for focussings. After this lapse of time, a new focussing was assumed, hence a new unit.

Coding Procedures

All but two categories were exclusive of each other. These two were

1) an utterance giving a specific or general category or principle which was *also* misleading or task-irrelevant. Such an utterance would be coded *both* as 1.1, 1.4 or 1.2, 1.4.

2) an utterance giving general guidance which was *also* recalling relevant past experience. Such an utterance would be coded both as 1.2, 1.5.

N.B. In calculating frequency of utterances, of course, such utterances would be counted only once.

Repetition. Immediately contiguous repetitions referring to the same placement or focussing were coded as one unit, lower levels of specificity being subsumed into the highest level used.

APPENDIX III (contd)

e.g. Put all those ones that are the same together. The same marks. All those ones with the circles.
1.1

However, not all repetition was of this contiguous kind. For instance a mother would sometimes repeat her utterance *following an incorrect response* by the child. This was termed a *repeated utterance:* if it referred to the same focussing or placement; was not a clarification; could not be subsumed into a higher category; and followed a substantive response by the child.

To qualify as *clarification*, an utterance referred to the same focussing or placement and used different explanatory terms *on the same level of specificity* as the prior utterance.

e.g. Put them in four groups. Four piles.
1.1 1.7

Implicit utterances. Where an utterance giving specific guidance was followed up by an utterance requiring a new focussing but *implying* the specific category used immediately before, then the follow-up utterance qualified as specific:

e.g. That one's big. And that's?
1.1 1.1

Similarly, where an utterance giving general guidance was followed up by an utterance requiring a new focussing but *implying* the general category used immediately before, then the follow-up utterance qualified as general:

e.g. Look,at the marks. What's that one?
1.2 1.2

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